

## what do I need?

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| Category:        | <a href="#">Gen</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
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## what do I need?

by [scooter3scooter](#)

### Summary

He's not coming. If I wasn't such a burden to him before maybe he would have helped me now. Maybe he would come pick me up and everything would be okay. But everything's not okay because I ruined everything. I should have lied more. I shouldn't have talked to my counselor. This. Shouldn't. Be. Happening.

# escape

## Chapter Notes

trigger warning: mentions of self-harm

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

*Why won't Happy just pick up? I know I'm a nuisance and he doesn't like me and I'm annoying and obnoxious but I really need him right now. Please, please pick up.*

I am stupid. That is not a thought or a feeling but a fact.

We had a stupid depression test in health and I even lied on it but my counselor still had a meeting with me about my mental health. He just asked so many questions and I was terrified and I didn't know what to do and I just *couldn't* lie. And then he found out that I cut and now he's going to call May and she's going to cry. I can't handle it when she cries. She's going to be so disappointed and she's going to blame herself and wonder what she did wrong.

I had to actively hold my tears back when I saw that Happy read my texts and didn't respond. I know I'm not supposed to go Upstate today but maybe if I can just go there for a little bit and prepare myself it'll be easier.

*He's not coming. If I wasn't such a burden to him before maybe he would have helped me now. Maybe he would come pick me up and everything would be okay. But everything's not okay because I ruined everything. I should have lied more. I shouldn't have talked to my counselor. This. Shouldn't. Be. Happening.*

*But it is. And it's my fault.*

The bell rang. I can't text him again until the day is over. Until I have to go back to the apartment.

...

**To Happy from Peter:**

**Happy, please pick me up. I know I'm a pain and I'm annoying you but I really need to be picked up. Please?**

He read it. And he didn't respond.

*I could just leave now. Just go and no one would need to know. I could be free. This is my chance. This is it. I can go.*

**To Peter from May:**

**Peter, come home. We need to talk.**

I started to walk to the apartment. But I knew I would regret it.

...

When I opened the door, she just stood there, not looking at me, not saying anything. I didn't dare to say a word, wishing that this would all go away, regretting coming here.

"We need to talk," her voice just sounded sad when she finally broke the silence. She walked to my room, but didn't enter. I followed her and went in, I sat on my bed. She followed suit, sitting right in front of me. I couldn't help feeling blocked in.

"I got a call from your counselor," she started, looking at me with those same eyes she had the day Uncle Ben died.

"What did they tell you?" *How much do you know?*

"He told me about the depression test..." she took a breath, "and that he asked you if you have ever self-harmed. He told me what you said."

A numbness consumed me. Maybe it's better that way. I can't get hurt if I can't feel.

“Did I cause this?” She looked me in the eye, I quickly averted my eyes.

“I-it’s just that-I-well-” I didn’t get to even finish a thought.

“So it’s my fault,” it wasn’t a question. A tear fell from her eye.

“Peter, you broke my trust,” *What?* “And you hurt me, you need to ask me for forgiveness.”

I was wrong, even when you’re numb you can get hurt, you bleed and then you bleed out and you get to die. You just get all the pain amplified after the numbness fades off.

*What? Why on earth would I apologize to her? How can this seem right to her?*

“I’m sorry,” I tried with all my might to not let my seething anger into my voice.

“I forgive you,” there was no emotion in her voice.

“How did you do it?”

*I shouldn’t have come here.*

“A blade...from a pencil sharpener,” I whispered. I don’t know if I’d rather cry or scream, but one thing I know is that I have to *get out* . But she’s blocking the way. I can’t escape.

“Give it to me,” she ordered. Knowing there was no other option, I got up and got my little box in the back of my dresser drawer. The only thing in it was the blade. “I don’t even know how you got that idea,” I heard her whisper.

“You’re not allowed to have hand sharpeners anymore. If you need to sharpen a pencil you’ll use an electric one.” When I sat back down on the bed, she took my blade and put it in her pocket.

*There's other ways I can do it. That's what I didn't say.*

"I also scratched myself..." I honestly don't know why I told her that.

"You have to keep your nails short from now on," she responded immediately, staring at my hands. "Did you do it on your arms?"

"Sorta," I mumbled, barely understandably. She roughly grabbed my arm and pulled up my sleeve. She inspected it, luckily those scars have faded more than the others.

"Where else did you do it?" She was still holding my arm too tightly. I wanted nothing more than to rip my arm away from her and run away.

I answered honestly, knowing there was no way out of it, "Mostly my thigh."

"Take your clothes off," she demanded, standing up.

*What? No. You can't make me show you my body, you can't, you can't do that!*

"Come on, Peter," she held no room for anything other than unquestioning obedience.

I slowly stood up, I looked at her once, just to make sure this is what she really wants.

"Take your pants off," she was losing her patience. I slowly slipped my pants off. "Now the shirt." I obeyed.

She stood there staring at my almost naked body. She made me turn around. She didn't ask before she lifted up my underwear to see if there were any scars underneath. I couldn't fight back. That's where most of the scars are.

"When was the last time you did it?" She was still staring at my body.

“About a week.” *Luckily*. You could see the new ones when she lifted up my underwear. The red lines were a contrast to the many white scars scattered there.

“From now on, periodically we will have checks to make sure you’re not doing this anymore. Promise me if you find any other pencil sharpeners you will give them to me. If I find any, I’m getting rid of them.”

“I promise,” I whispered. *I lied*.

Then she dared to pull me into a hug, me with my clothes off, after she dared to touch me against my will and look at my body. Then she finally left the room. I quickly put my clothes back on.

I remembered I still have one more blade hidden.

I went into the bathroom, without my extra blade. I didn’t turn on the lights. I drowned in the darkness around me. And I let out a sob. I quickly covered my mouth to keep myself quiet.

*I can’t breathe, I can’t breathe, I can’t-I can’t-*

My breaths quickened too fast and not enough oxygen was coming in. It only caused me to cry harder. Which made it harder to breathe. It’s an endless cycle. Nausea hit me but nothing would come up.

After who knows how long, she knocked on the door. She asked me if I was okay. I cleared my throat and said yes. I wiped my tears away and took a few deep breaths. I flushed the toilet to at least pretend I wasn’t just sobbing my guts out.

“I’m going to call Tony and ask him to have dinner with you. I have some friends I need to talk to.”

“Are you going to tell him?” Hesitance filled my voice.

“Of course,” she answered as if the answer is obvious.

...

*I can't even have normalcy with Mr. Stark anymore. She didn't even ask me, she just told him. Now he'll hate me, he won't want me around anymore. I disappointed him. He already goes through so much, I can't add this to his plate. Add me to his already full plate.*

“Hey Peter,” though his tone was happy when he greeted me, it was forced. He came, and he’s driving himself. It’ll just be me and him. Aunt May didn’t even say goodbye, but the thought of talking to her again just brings back that dread and that *need* to escape.

I noticed when Mr. Stark purposely put on my favorite band, even though he hates it.

We drove without talking for a while. Then he spoke, “We can have a casual dinner if you want, or we can talk. Whatever you need.”

*What do I need?*

## Chapter End Notes

I explain why I wrote this chapter the way I did in the notes for chapter 2.



# Dad

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

We ended up at a fast food restaurant. The place was empty so we didn't really worry about him getting seen.

We got our food fairly quickly, and we just started eating. No talking. I realized pretty quickly that he was not going to talk about everything unless I brought it up.

I wasn't going to bring it up. I really wasn't. But...

*I just I don't understand-I can't understand why she would make me apologize to her. What- how could that ever seem right for her to do? I don't get it, I don't understand, why is that right? Why should I apologize for what I did?*

"She made me apologize to her," I murmured.

"She did *what*?" He was clearly trying very hard not to sound mad.

"She said I *broke* her trust and that I hurt *her* and made me apologize to her."

*I just...I don't understand...*

"That's not okay. That is wrong and the worst thing she could have made you do," he looked determined to try to fix things. But he can't fix something like this.

"When she asked me if I did it on my arms, and I said sorta, she grabbed my wrist and she held it too tightly and she pulled my sleeve up," a few tears leaked from my eyes as I opened up, "and then she made me promise if I found I blade I would give it to her." I didn't tell him that I was lying. "But then..." my tears wouldn't stop coming, "she made me take my clothes off and she looked at me and she touched me." I tried to keep going but I was crying too hard.

“Can I give you a hug?” I nodded. *I need it.*

He came around the table and pulled me into a tight hug. But in this one I don’t have that desperation to *escape* but a need to hold him tighter. I’m not trapped with him.

“I’m going to talk to her. What she did was wrong on every level and she needs to know that. You don’t deserve that, okay? You don’t deserve for her to treat you like that,” he looked me in the eye, and I held his gaze.

“Can I stay with you tonight?”

“Of course, I want you to stay with me. But I’m worried May will say no.”

I didn’t mean for another tear to drop at his answer.

But he continued, “I’ll fight for you. I’ll always fight for you.”

...

He had brought me to his car, helped me in it but he stayed outside to call Aunt May.

I didn’t mean to eavesdrop but it's so easy with my enhanced hearing.

“Hey May...no, he's not okay,” Mr. Stark was trying really hard to keep his voice even. “I think he should stay with me, May... He is crying in my car and you have the audacity to say what he deserves! It’s not like he’s grounded, you can’t keep him in the apartment forever!...Yeah well we will be talking about this further on another day.”

I wiped my tears away when he came back into the car, “she said you can stay with me.” I didn’t mind that he lied to me for my benefit.

“What about school?” *Please don't make me go...*

“Screw school. We’re going Upstate,” I almost let out a laugh.

...

He told me on the ride up that he didn’t and wouldn’t tell anyone else what happened today, or that I cut, without talking to me first. But May already talked to her friends, and May’s the one that told Mr. Stark. Just because it’s *okay* that she told Mr. Stark doesn’t mean *she* gets to tell *anyone*. Even if she’s doing it to get advice on how to deal with me, she doesn’t have the right.

It’s impossible to not be mad at her. What she did...that’s not okay. But she doesn’t know better. She’s never dealt with this before, and that’s good. No one else she cares about has done what I’ve done. *But she still hurt me. And I can’t get past that. Every time I think of her all I see is her sitting in front of me, blocking me in. I just feel her grabbing me. I hear her telling me to take my clothes off. It’s all too much...*

“Pete, how about we watch a movie?” I nodded to his suggestion, rubbing my eyes. He picked out a few options for me to make the final decision, I noticed how they were all happy and funny movies.

We started the movie I picked, but I couldn’t bring myself to even smile.

Then I broke. I let out a gross, loud, sob. I tried to cover my mouth so that I wouldn’t bother him, but he immediately pulled me close.

“It’s okay to cry, let it out if you have to,” and I did. I sobbed even harder than I did in the bathroom earlier that day. But this time I have someone to allow me to cry, to hold me close without me feeling suffocated, to help me. “I need you to know, Underoos, that I’m not mad at you. I’m not going to ask you to show me, I’m not going to even ask you to stop. This is your decision, but I will be here with you every step of the way.”

*That. That was the right thing to say.*

“Dad?”

After a breath he responded, “yeah, Pete?”

“I want to stay here with you.”

## Chapter End Notes

So guys, I want you to know that what happened in the first chapter, how she reacted, the point was that it was wrong. Believe me, I know it was wrong. What ‘May’ said and did, that’s what happened to me. And I’m still not over it. When I said I needed to write that, it’s because I’m trying to let go, but I can’t.

Last chapter was what happened to me.

This chapter was what I wish had happened to me.

# Home

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“Tony! You can’t just take my child just because he’s your new shiny thing! He’s mine!” May screamed at him. Tony purposely had Peter stay in the car with Happy in case a scenario like this went down.

“First of all, he’s not *yours*. You have been taking care of him, yes, but he’s not your object. You do not own him. You can’t just do whatever you want to him,” Tony managed to keep his voice somewhat level.

“What are you implying, Stark?” Her voice was dangerously low.

“He’s upset May, he feels betrayed and-”

“Betrayed?! He’s betrayed?! He hurt himself, he didn’t come to *me*, the woman that took care of him since his parents died! *He* betrayed *me*!” She yelled, tears in her eyes.

“How could you possibly...” he trailed off, biting back any other remarks he was dying to shoot back at her, knowing he’ll never do what needs to be done like this. “I’m doing what’s best for Peter. I know you are angry and upset and don’t understand, but I’m helping him.”

“So you get to just take my kid now?” Her voice was quieter now.

“I’m not saying it’s for forever, but until he’s doing better,” his voice softened too.

“This is kidnapping,” she was still trying to stop him.

“Not if he wants it. Getting away, being able to escape for a little while, it’ll help him.”

“It’s not my fault if what he perceives as reality isn’t what’s actually happening,” she sounded so fricken sure of herself.

“You think you have a right to say what he feels? To say if it’s real or not?” It was getting increasingly harder for him to stay calm.

“It’s not my fault Satan is in his head.”

That. That right there was too far.

“I’m taking his stuff, and we are leaving.”

...

Mr. Stark told me to stay here, he didn’t say why, but I know he doesn’t want me to hear him and Aunt May fighting. Happy hasn’t even said anything, he’ll barely look at me.

*He’s disappointed. Now he’ll never care about me. He’ll never want me around again.*

“Look kid...” he let out a breath, finally breaking the awkward quietness, “I’m sorry I didn’t come pick you up yesterday. I should have. I wish I had.”

I want to say that it’s okay. But it’s not. I want to say that it was fine. But it wasn’t. None of this would have happened if he had come and got me. But if he had gotten me and May called, Mr. Stark probably would have made me leave. Then I wouldn’t have been Upstate last night.

“It’s because that you didn’t pick me up that I’m here now,” I told him, after a moment.

“Is that good?” He asked, genuinely.

“Maybe it’s better this way.”

That was when Mr. Stark came outside, carrying my stuff.

“Mr. Stark? Wha-what are you doing? I thought you were just going to talk to May.” *What’s going on?*

“You said you want to stay with me. Is that still true?” He asked me straight up, looking me in the eye.

“Yes,” I answered truthfully.

“Then you’re staying with me. Is there anything else you want, I can go get it.” He put my stuff in the trunk, as I followed close behind him.

“No, no it’s fine. It’s good. Thank you,” he turned to face me.

His gaze was sad, but also hopeful, “Come on kid, let’s go home.”

#### Chapter End Notes

Some of what May said, has been said in my household. The rest is what I wish had happened. I always just wanted to escape everything.

## to know why

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

#### **To Peter from May**

**Peter, you know what I realized? I could have lost you. I could have lost you too. When you did those bad things, you could have died.**

*But I didn't care. She says that as if I had cared whether I died or not.*

“Who are you texting?” Mr. Stark questioned as he came back into the common room from the bathroom.

“Oh, uh, no one. It’s nothing,” I quickly turned my phone off and put it in my pocket.

“How many times has May texted you?” He sat down next to me.

I couldn't meet his eyes, “that-that was the first one.”

“Now the real answer?” He gently prodded.

“A few times...” he put his arm around me.

“Do you want her to stop?” It wasn’t mean, the way he said it, but caring... and maybe, protective? I nodded slowly.

*Even when I'm not there, I can't get away...*

“I’ll help you, alright? I’ll always help you,” he sounded so sure, so confident, as if I'm not the worthless piece of trash that I am.



“Why? Why, no *how* can you care so much about me?” *I'm worthless*. “I've always had issues! Always! Since second grade I've had self-esteem issues. Most people don't even realize that kids that young can hate who they are. Since third grade I've hated how I look. Since fifth I realized that I'm different than everyone else, in the worst ways. In sixth was when I started having abandonment issues, or at least more severe. And then I'm eighth everything got so much worse. And since then I've only hated myself more and more!”

I didn't mean to start crying again...

“I care about you because you are what I wish I was, you are genuinely good, you are selfless and caring. If I had half the courage and selflessness you have when I was a kid, I could have done a lot better. But even more than that, I love *you*, Peter Parker. Not just Spider-Man, but Peter Parker. The adorable and dorky kid that can talk anyone's ear off.”

*Did he just tell me he loves me?*

## Chapter End Notes

Sorry it's short.

I was going to have a long thing about my feelings and how I'm projecting them into Peter, but I feel like then you'll think I'm just saying this stuff for attention. I don't want you guys to think I'm lying. I still struggle to tell if my fears are rational or not, so I'm just going to stop this.

# help

## Chapter Notes

Trigger warning for self-harm

Sometimes it could be the best day ever, it could be a good day, but then suddenly everything is just wrong. Every sound is just deafening, everything touching your skin feels suffocating, just, everything is wrong. But your mind is the worst part. It takes every good thing about your day, any nice thing people may have said, and it turns it all around. Everything you did was wrong. Anything that went wrong was your fault. Anything nice someone said they said because they felt bad for you. And anything you said they think was for attention.

It sucks.

This sucks.

What happened with May just *won't leave my mind. I can't escape it. I need it out. I need the pain to go away. I need the thoughts to end. I need everything to just stop.*

Earlier today I had snuck into Mr. Starks room and stole one of his razors, I lied to Friday saying it was to shave.

I couldn't sing more praises with how thankful I am for the new blade. And it's sharp, it'll be easier than the one at the apartment.

With me, it's weird, most people, from what I know, don't cut as many times but they go deep. I don't go deep but I do it many times. The blood has never even dripped, just bubbled up. I counted once, how many scars and new cuts I had, it was over eighty. That was a while ago, it must be well over a hundred now. But it's not dangerous, I don't go deep.

The lingering pain is the biggest nuisance. You get used to the sting on your thigh when you walk, even the mild burn of water against fresh cuts in the shower. But the worst is when sweat gets into the cuts, it feels like taking a torch to your leg. But it's just a reminder of the pain that caused it. It's worth it.

When I got into the bathroom attached to the room I always stay in when I'm here, I could not rip my clothes off fast enough. I'm surprised I didn't rip them. The itchy feeling they left across my skin made me want to scream.

I need to think clearly. I need to focus. I need to do this.

The first one was quick, just a swift swipe across my thigh. I guess the razor was sharper than I thought, it was deeper than normal. But still not bleeding too much. It's fine.

The next one wasn't quite as deep. *It wasn't enough.*

So I kept going. More and more littered my already scar covered thigh. I always do the same thigh, I guess it's just easier that way.

I always keep most of the cuts up high enough where my underwear will cover it enough. It's safer that way.

"Hey Pete, you okay?" Tony was right outside the bathroom.

*No. Go, please, go. You can't be here, you can't, you have to go. Leave, please, please go, you have to go. You aren't supposed to be here, you have to leave. No one's supposed to come, no one ever comes. Everyone just leaves. Why won't you?*

"Yeah," my voice cracked, *I'm so stupid*, "my-my stomach just hurts."

"Peter, I'm here for you. If you need to talk, or to cry, or to just do nothing, I would never dare judge you."

*He doesn't believe me.*

"I'm fine," my voice was stronger that time, you can't hear the tears in it. *When did I start crying, I usually cut to stop the crying.*

“Pete, you didn’t sound fine, can I come in?” His voice quivered.

“No!” I quickly clamped my hand over my mouth, breathing too hard, trying to *just calm down* before I continued, “I’m alright, I’ll be out in a minute.”

“Kid, it’s okay to need help, it’s alright if you’re not okay. But I want to help you,” the desperation was clear in his tone.

*Go, go, leave please. I don’t-I can’t do this! Don’t come in here!*

“Peter...” he let out a deep breath, “I’ll have to come in there if you don’t open the door. You can cry, you can scream, we can sit in silence if you need it, but you need to open the door.”

*No! No, he-he can’t do this! He’s, he’s acting like...he’s acting like May.*

“Go away,” I let out a sob, quickly covering my mouth again. *Too late.*

“Please let me help you, Underoos,” he sounded like he himself was on the verge of tears.

“You can’t- you *can’t fix me!* I’m broken!”

*Stupid. I’m so stupid. I shouldn’t have said that. I’m such an idiot.*

“Well can I try?” He sounds so scared, I made Tony Stark scared.

“How?” *I sound like such a stupid child.*

“Let’s start by opening the door.”

*There's not enough, I don't have enough time. There's not enough.*

I quickly grabbed a tissue and wiped my leg of the blood. I figured my thigh isn't bleeding enough to need a bandaid. I just shoved my clothes back on, stuffing my blade into my pocket. I flushed the bloody tissue down the toilet, washing my hands before finally opening the stupid door.

“Peter...” he almost jumped forward before asking for consent first, “Can I hug you?” I nodded immediately. The hug was tight but not confining. But when he shifted it jostled my leg, causing me to yelp in pain and flinch back.

“Oh kid...” *he knows* .

# anything

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

*I disappointed him. I just disappointed him again...*

*No, no, no, no...I ruined everything.*

I quickly stepped back from him, escaping into the bathroom before slamming the door.

“Pete, Peter, I'm not mad. I'm not disappointed. I just...I just want to help you,” he was still right there, just on the other side of the door.

“You keep saying that but you *can't* help someone like me. You can't fix me, I'm broken and you can't fix that!” I collapsed on the floor in a pathetic mess.

I had my back against the door as I laid, curled up, on the bathroom floor.

I heard his voice, it sounded like he was sitting right next to me.

“Kid, do you know that I get panic attacks?” He continued before I could think of a response, “I used to get them all the time. *All* the time. I still get them, but not as often. I still have PTSD though, that, I don't think will ever go away. I used to stay up all night, every night, to protect myself from the nightmares.”

*He's like me?*

*But he can't be, I'm just Peter Parker the worthless loser, and he's The Tony Stark.*

“It's okay, normal even in this line of business, to get panic attacks, to have PTSD, to cry, to need help.”

*But that's different...I mean I get all that stuff, but they don't hurt themselves over it.*

“How did you stop the nightmares?” I decided to ask that instead of voicing my other thoughts.

“I personally go to therapy, it's really good to talk things out with someone. I will *always* be here to talk and to listen. But if you want to try therapy, I can help you with that too, I'll make sure you get the right therapist. If that's what you want.”

I have thought multiple times that I need therapy. But maybe I just need someone to listen.

“What are you going to do if I open the door?” My voice was still quiet, but not quivering anymore.

“If you want me to, I'll hug you. I'll tell you that no matter what you do, I'll always be here for you. If you want, you can cry for as long as you need, you can talk, or we can just do nothing. I'll do anything for you. But I need to make sure you're okay,” he answered truthfully.

“Will...will you make me take off my clothes?” I couldn't keep the fear out of my voice.

## Chapter End Notes

Guys I'm really sorry, I don't know where to go from here.

# belief

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Then my phone buzzed. I forgot I had thrown it across the floor when I ripped my clothes off to cut.

*It's not the time for this. I can't do this right now.*

But the phone buzzed again. And the only way to stop that insistent nuisance is to get it. I dragged myself across the cold floor to that stupid thing that refused to just *please shut up!*

## **To Peter from May**

**I think you should know, I never believed you were depressed. You're way too happy.**

This time, when I threw my phone, I meant to break it.

“What was that?!” Mr. Stark frantically shouted, “Peter, what happened?!”

“Why won't she just leave me alone?” My voice broke as I reached up and tugged at my hair in desperation.

“I told her to stop,” I heard him, his voice low, not meant for me to hear. A *need* came over me, and I opened the door. I actually opened the door. This time I initiated the hug. It was tight, and warm, and good. After a few blissful moments of content silence, I pulled back.

“Now what?” I heard myself ask him.

“How about, I have Friday scan you to see if you are in dire need of medical attention? And from there, we'll figure it out together.”



*No option he could give would be ideal but this could work. I get a say.*

“Master Parker has multiple, small, tears in his skin, but is not in ‘dire need of medical attention’.” Friday informed him.

“Well, then we can deal with the emotional aspect of this. What do you need?”

*To escape. To be free. For the thoughts to end. To disappear. For everything to stop. I need someone to believe me. I need a way out.*

“I need a way out,” I answered without lying, for once.

After a moment of pondering, he smirked “I have an idea.”

After many answerless questions and him grabbing all the bedding from both of our rooms, we went up to the roof. Then, after telling me to wait there, he went and came back with two full tubs of ice cream and two spoons. He motioned for me to sit down, and we cocooned ourselves in the softest blankets I had ever felt.

It was quiet, and it was peaceful. *Everything* was quieter. The softness felt safe against my skin, the ice cream wasn't too cold in my hands. And it was comfortable with him lying next to me, staring at the stars. You could never see this many in the city.

“I broke my phone...” I whispered after a long while.

“I can get you a new one if you want,” he offered, looking over at me with those caring eyes. *I still don't understand how he could care about me . How he could...no. That had to have been a lie.*

“I don't want one,” he looked at me understandingly after I voiced my decision. But I continued, “she never believed me. I... the thought just didn't occur to me that she just *wouldn't* believe me.”

“It's not your fault that she just doesn't understand,” his voice was soothing as he pulled me close. I let out a hum of contentment when he started running his fingers through my hair.

“Do you believe me?” My voice small.

“Always.”

“Did you mean what you said when you said you love me?”

“I would never lie to you.”

## Chapter End Notes

So this one...this is purely because my brother, the ONE person in my family that I thought believed me, he told me last week that he never did. And I had been just thinking about how I haven't locked myself in the bathroom and cried in so long. Yeah that little streak is over. I know you guys don't care but I need to let this out. The ONLY person I didn't think I had to doubt, had to wonder, had to ask if he believed me, never did. And now I don't feel like I can go to him anymore because what am I supposed to do if he never believed me? And then Tony, I wish someone had wiped away my tears and told me that it's not my fault that he won't just believe that my issues are real and i want to believe that they aren't my fault, that my stupid mind and emotions aren't my fault. But what I got was my other brother banging on the bathroom door because I was taking too long. And y'all, I know this story sucks, and I feel bad, but...I don't even know anything anymore.

## strength

May wants me to go back. *But May wants me.* Yet, I want to stay here. The thought of leaving...it's enough to make me spiral. And after what she did...

*Everything* she said and did was wrong. It just made everything worse. Her ways to get me stop just made me *need* to cut more. That day, crying in the bathroom...I never wanted to die more. If I had had the energy to, I might have. I might have been dead right now, and I would have been content.

*But then Tony wouldn't love me.*

*And he's the closest thing, since Ben, to being like...*

But May won't stop. She's angrier. *But that'll just destroy me more.* She says she'll call the police. And tell them what? That I ran away to be with Iron Man? That he kidnapped me?

She raised me. Yes. But I have had so many issues with my mental health, my self-esteem, my self-worth, my body image, *everything*, since elementary school. It's not like I'm suddenly like this, it's just that you are suddenly *seeing* me like this.

But is it my fault? If I had spoken up about my issues earlier, would I have gotten the help I need? If I had been stronger and just *not* cut, would I still be with May? If I had just left the day I talked to my counselor, I would be free. I wouldn't be trapped. But I probably would have died out there. And maybe I would have been okay with that.

"Peter, this is your decision. Not mine, not May's, *yours*. Do you want to stay here, or go back to May's? You are always welcome here, if you *ever* change your mind, even at four in the morning, call me. Call Happy. Use Karen, she'll help you. Call us and we will come get you, no questions, no anger, we will come," he was looking me dead in the eye, "And if you want to stay there, I understand. We can still stick with your weekly visits if you want. Alright? You get to decide what is best for *you* and *your* mental health."

*I get to decide?*

For once, I do get a say in what happens in my life. May can't take this away.

*I don't want to go back...I can't go back...but I have to, don't I?*

“Can I just see her?” *Maybe things have changed.*

“Of course, bud,” though he smiled, it didn't reach his eyes.

...

The second I opened the apartment door, I was immediately yanked into a suffocating hug.

“Oh Peter, are you okay?” She cupped my cheek in her hand and it took all my willpower not to slap her hand away.

“I'm fine,” it came out emotionless, almost cold. Her small smile withered, but she did not move away. I had told Tony that I needed to do this on my own, that I could do it. But I'm weak. But I need him.

“Come on, we have to talk,” and she led me to my own room. It's crazy how different something can seem when you haven't seen it in a while. But maybe it's not the room that's different.

She sat me down on my bed, to which I moved back until I was leaning against the wall, and she sat on the end of the bed. Between me and the door.

“What you did was not okay.” *How could she have started that sentence any worse?* “And I have no idea why you would do such a thing? Do you not think you're good enough?” *Since when have I ever been enough?* “Why didn't you just talk to me?” *Did you never notice how broken I am?* “Why didn't you just tell me that you're struggling?” *As if it's so easy.*

She looked at me expectantly. She actually thinks I can come up with a calm response to that crap?

“I don't know...” *I do know.*

“Am I not enough for you?” That’s when the tears started. “Did I do this to you?”

*Is it bad that my first thought was yes.*

She took a few calming breaths, before getting herself able enough to keep talking at me.

“Okay, get up,” my eyes widened, “take your clothes off. I have to check.” That's when my breath fled my lungs. I was frozen. Then she grabbed my wrist and it felt like it did that day. And I flinched, and she didn’t let go. *Let go. Let me go! Let me leave! Let me-please, let me go! No! Don’t make me get up! Don’t pull me! Stop!*

But she didn’t stop.

I was standing in front of her then. I should have ran right there, but I couldn’t even find the strength to breathe.

“Take them off,” she left no room for argument. Stiffly, I pulled my clothes off again. And she was looking at my body. And she was looking at the cuts.

All she sees is cuts, not the broken boy under them.

“Why did you do that, Peter?” She almost sounded angry.

“I-I don’t, I couldn’t...” I couldn’t finish my sentence. There was no more air in my lungs.

“Answer me,” she scolded sharply.

“I’m sorry...” *But I’m not.*

There was nothing left in me to stop myself from crying.

But then I finally got to run out that stupid door. It was like my body got a mind of its own, and it brought me to my only safe place in this stupid apartment. *Where else could I run to?* I locked myself in the bathroom.

“Peter, come out now,” her voice was firm, but I heard her snuffle.

I didn’t bring my suit with me in here, I don’t have Karen. I can’t call Mr. Stark.

*There’s no way to escape.*

Maybe I’m not so different after all.

## to breathe

I want to scream. I want to cry. I want to do *anything* but I can't. I'm trapped and I can't breathe, I- *I can't breathe!*

*Knocking.* The noises won't stop.

*Banging.* She just won't leave me alone.

*Yelling.* I can't get away.

There's no way out.

The one time I want to cry, the tears won't come. I want to scream, break everything in this stupid little room, but I can't get myself to get up.

*Screaming.* She won't leave me alone.

*Banging.* The noises surround me, they choke out what little air I have left.

*I need a way out.*

I didn't bring my blade with me. I didn't bring my suit into the bathroom with me, so there's so way to get to Karen. So there's no way to get to Tony.

*But my nails are long enough.*

I used my thumb nail, not even caring that I was doing it on my wrist, dragging it across my skin. Back and forth. Back and forth, back and forth, again and again. Over the same spot again and again. Going deeper each time.

The skin scratched away so easy, it turned red, but not red enough. Not blood red, yet. But the skin around the scratches started turning paler and began to puff up. I stopped for only a second, to feel the skin. It *burned* at my touch, but it was good. The pale skin felt almost hard, it was bizarre. But I kept going, in a new spot now, about an inch down on my wrist.

The pain makes me focus, it helps me breathe. Like when you fly too high and need an oxygen mask. Now I'm just waiting to fall back down. It'll come.

She continued banging on the door, but it was like I could hear it, but it wasn't killing me anymore.

*If you scratch yourself enough, will you bleed?*

I should call Tony, I know I should. But to do that, I have to leave the bathroom. I have to face her. Even the idea of standing up makes me want to throw up, but that won't come either.

I'm trapped, but at least I can breathe.

...

"He said he wanted to do this alone," Tony defended himself as Happy, much slower than usual, drove away from May's apartment. They had been driving in silence before Tony blurted that out.

"And you believed him?" Happy scoffed, incredulously. "And he's been saying that he's *fine* for months and look where that got him."

"Go back." Happy did not argue the order. Making an extremely illegal u-turn, they went back, very clearly breaking the speed limit.

...

Then I could hear another voice yelling. And another. I recognized the two new voices, but I couldn't stop. I haven't even bled yet.



“You can’t just take him again!” She screeched. I dug my nail even harder into my wrist.

“He needs help!” Mr. Stark yelled back, and I paused for a moment, listening for his voice again.

But May spoke, or rather screamed, next, “and you can give him what he needs?! I raised him! You can’t just swoop in and steal him from me! He’s mine!”

“He said he wanted to stay with me. He asked to *see* you, not to stay with you. Now he’s locked himself in the bathroom and I’m here to take him home,” before she could shoot back an argument, he was at the door.

“Hey buddy, do you wanna go home? If you open the door, we can go home. Okay?”

“You’ll never be his dad,” venom dripped from her words, knowing that was what would hurt him.

“Well you’re not his mom,” he was quick to bite back. “Happy can you...?” He didn’t have to finish the sentence.

After more shouting, he spoke, voice softened, “okay Underoos, it’s just you and me. Whatever happened, this is *not* your fault. I won’t be mad at you for anything that happened. I promise.”

*But he’ll be disappointed. He’ll leave me. But better than him dying.*

*But there’s no other way out. The only way out is to lose the only person I have left.*

I opened the door.

## a better way

### Chapter Notes

this was a hard chapter to write guys  
\*trigger warning for suicide attempt\*

The profanities filling my head luckily did not spill out my mouth as I realized that I just chose *me* over *him*. *Peter fricken Parker over The Tony Stark. I made the wrong decision, again.*

He let out a breath of relief the second he saw me. Before I let my guard down, I quickly flit my eyes around the room.

“She’s not here, buddy,” he attempted to sooth me.

*She hates me. She’s pissed. She couldn’t stand being near me. I messed everything up. She’s right, it is my fault. It’s always my fault. Every time. Why do I always have to ruin everything good?*

*Does that mean I’ll mess everything up with Mr. Stark too?*

*I already did...*

“I’ll go,” I already started to back away from him.

“Kid, where are you going? What do you mean you’ll ‘go’?” He did not even try to mask his concern.

“I shouldn’t be here. I shouldn’t be anywhere...” the second part was whispered to myself, but by his widened eyes he had to have heard me. I’m just that stupid.

“You...where do you need to go? We can get out of here, we can go back to the compound if you want. But I don’t think you should be left alone right now.”

*I'm scaring him. He's scared of me? For me? For my well being? But...I'm scaring him. This isn't right.*

My head was shaking 'no' before my mouth could get the word out. I quickly turned around and ran into my room, straight to the window. I threw it open and launched myself out of it before any fears could stop me. Not even Mr. Starks voice calling after me was enough to stop me.

I leaped away from my building and scaled the wall of the building next to it. Part of me hoped Mr. Stark would follow me. Part of me was terrified he wouldn't.

*Where can I even go? I'll die out here on my own. But if I'll die anyway...*

I've thought about it more times than I care to admit. I quickly realized that overdosing just wouldn't work, there's way to big a chance that I'll mess it up somehow. Same with trying to cut myself to death. When I cut before, I was never trying to die. But no one understands that. If I was trying to die, I would have gone on my wrist, it's easier to hit the vein that way. I would have gone so much deeper, and I would have gone vertical. Vertical is suicide, horizontal is cutting. I only ever went horizontal. I wanted to try to live. Maybe that was stupid.

Being quick about it is probably right. It's stupid, but I don't remember how to tie a noose. I don't really feel like trying to get a gun, stabbing myself is just messy and I don't want that. So jumping then...yeah. That's easier. But I have to get high enough.

There's not too many buildings were I am certain that would kill me with my enhancements. The one building I know I could die from is the Avengers building...but that would be idiotic. Not even I am that stupid.

A bridge could work. Even if I survive the fall, the water should do it. I've always been afraid of drowning, it's how I've always felt. Like my mind is trying to drown me. That it is filling my lungs with the weight of my flaws, choking me. *Suffocating me.*

That day I first went after the Vulture, and he dropped me in the lake, for a moment I didn't fight it. I let the water fill me, and it almost felt right. But Mr. Stark saved me...wait, no. It wasn't him. It was a robot. He wasn't there. Will he be here this time?

The optimistic part of me, that tiny little part, it thinks Mr. Stark is coming after me. And if that

part is right, then I have to move faster. I have to get to the bridge. Because if he gets to me first...that'll be so much worse...

*I didn't write a note...*

A small part of my mind reminded me. But who would even care anyway?

*Mr. Stark would.*

*No. He wouldn't. He's a superhero, he's everything and I am nothing. I'm just a broken little kid from Queens. He'll forget about me soon enough. It's better that way.*

I thought I heard thrusters in the distance, but it was probably just that little part of me that still had hope somehow.

...

Every single curse Tony knew escaped his mouth as Peter flung himself out his bedroom window. He cursed himself for not bringing a suit as he called one, trying to run after Peter. Even when he screamed Peter's name, his kid never turned around.

His suit could not have come slower, even when it in reality only took a few minutes.

...

The bridge was shorter than I had hoped. But if I let myself, it'll work. And everything will be over. And I can't hurt anyone anymore.

If I jump, I won't fly. I'll fall. And if the fall won't kill me, the drowning will. It just works out so well.

I am just Peter Parker. Nothing more, everything less. I am just a broken little boy from Queens. A boy in which everyone he loved left. Either by death, or they just couldn't handle him anymore.

I am just Peter Parker. I am broken. I am stupid. I am ugly. I am ruinous. I am a mistake. I am nothing.

I am just Peter Parker. I do not belong here.

I am just Peter Parker. And the wind just feels so good on my face. There's a slight bite of cold and maybe I'll freeze down there.

I am just Peter Parker. And stepping out to the very edge of the bridge was not enough. One more inch and I would fall, and that sounds right.

I am just Peter Parker. And I closed my eyes.

I am just Peter Parker. And I jumped.

I am just Peter Parker. And I didn't fly.

I am just Peter Parker. And the pain hit me. I felt my broken self *crack*.

I am just Peter Parker. And the impact did not kill me. So I will wait for everything else to.

I am just Peter Parker. And I am going to drown here. *Finally*.

I am just Peter Parker.

I am just nothing.

...

Even at its max, his suit just would not fly fast enough. Even while flying after his kid, all Tony could see was the fear in his eyes, all he could hear was his kids last words to him running through his head again and again like a broken record, all he could think about was how could he have failed his kid this much?

No matter how many nightmares Tony has had about losing Peter, *nothing* could have prepared him for the sight before him. He never slowed down, but he couldn't stop Peter from jumping. He couldn't catch him. There will never be a sound that could ever haunt him more than the sickening *shatter* the kids body made when he hit the water. Like glass hitting concrete.

And even when the boy hit the water, he didn't move. He didn't try to swim. Everything felt in slow motion.

Diving into the water. Getting his metal covered hands around the boy which he loves like his own son. Pulling his kid out of the freezing water. He tried to move then, fight him off. But his limbs wouldn't work. Flying faster. Flying up. Flying as fast as his suit would go to the Compound, knowing that was the only place that could save him. Cursing himself for selling the tower with such a close by medbay. Praying to whatever God that would listen to *please just save him*.

...

I heard myself break again, but it wasn't enough. It's never enough. I allowed myself to stay still as I sunk beneath the surface. Then the water, *god the water*.

The first breath in made me choke. I tried to cough but under the waves, it only pulled more inside me. I could *feel* myself suffocating. Every breath *burning* me alive. But my body started to freeze. My limbed ached and *why won't the pain just stop?*

I could feel the darkness taking over. Pulling me, *asking me* to go deeper. So I did. I let myself fall. And as I started to feel blissfully numb, I faintly heard something. And then there were cold arms around my waist. They were pulling me away from the eternal sleep I crave so deeply. I tried to push them away but my limbs wouldn't obey. My mind got slower, and it was like it was finally stopping. So I stopped trying. And I felt that darkness come back.

...

He didn't put a single thought into damage control as he burst into the medbay upstate. He already

wasted too much time.

“Help! Help! He needs help!” The screams teared from his raw throat as he landed. It took every spec of his self-control to not blast the doctors trying to pry Peter from his fingers.

“Stark, I’m sorry, but you need to let him go,” and at that statement he was ready to kill every other person in that room. But he needed them to save the kid he failed. The kid he let fall. The kid he didn’t catch. The kid he needed.

The doctors and nurses immediately got to work. There was just too much to be done and too little time. Tony had to will himself not to throw up when the doctors started noting everything wrong with the kid. Then they took him. He needed surgery and he couldn’t get in their way. But that didn’t stop him from trying to follow them anyway.

“Mr. Stark-” a nurse began only for Tony to cut her off.

“Don’t you *dare* call me that!” He seethed.

“You need to stay back, you can’t get in their way. If you want what’s best for the kid, then you’ll leave it to us,” she tried her best to hold him back.

“Fine,” the rage in his voice was enough to shake her to her core. The second the nurse went into the operating room, he demanded Friday to call Dr. Cho and Dr. Strange. If he couldn’t do anything for his kid at that second he would make sure that he got the best doctors there are to help him in the meantime.

Dr. Strange was first to arrive, coming through a portal, immediately going into the operating room too, not bothering a word to Tony. The only thing he did before he went in was opening another portal for Dr. Cho to come through, as Friday had told him it was necessary. Even with the two best doctors Tony knew trying to put his kid back together, it did almost nothing to comfort him.

...

“Where’s the kid?!” Happy’s voice was more frantic than Tony had ever heard it before. But he was not surprised that Friday had called and informed him on what happened.

“Still in surgery,” though his voice was void of emotion, the tears on Tony’s cheeks threw any doubts away.

“What happened?” He demanded, going over to stand in front of his boss.

“He jumped,” it just sounded *wrong* to hear Tony Stark’s voice crack. But it did. And he put his hands over his face, pressing his fingers into his eyes attempting to force the tears to stay in. He just could not cry here, not in front of Happy.

“He did *what*?” There was a sickening hollowness to Happy's voice.

“He-he just-I-oh *god*,” he couldn’t say it again. Just once was too much for one lifetime. He scrubbed a hand over his face, wiping any stray tears away. “I failed him. He jumped and I wasn’t in time to catch him.”

“You couldn't have-” Happy tried.

“What? *What*, Happy? He needed me, and I wasn’t there. I was the one he got past to get out the window. I was the one who didn’t think to bring a suit with me. I was the one who wasn’t fast enough.”

Happy could not come up with a counter argument. And so they sat. They waited and no one came to tell them everything would be okay because *it wouldn’t*.

After who knows how long, Happy asked a very important question, “should we tell May? She has a right to know.”

“What the kid doesn’t need is more drama to go down with May the second he wakes up. We’ll ask. Once he’s awake. We’ll ask what he needs.” He couldn't dare say the word *if*. He couldn't dare let himself think like that.



## nothingness

“He’s really lucky-” that was the wrong way for Dr. Strange to start the sentence.

“Lucky?! He’s lucky?! He jumped off a bridge, Strange!” It did not take much for Tony to snap.

“What I was about to say,” he did not even try to hide his annoyance, “is that he is lucky he landed in the position he did. By some miracle he did not rupture any internal organs or shatter his skull. But both of his legs are completely shattered, and he has a severe concussion. But with a body like his he should have the concussion healed up in at most a week, and the legs should be out of the casts in less than a month.”

Tony had to sit down, running a hand through his already tangled hair, taking in everything he just heard. “But, but he’ll be okay, right?”

At hearing Tony’s terrified tone, Stephen took a softer voice with his response, “physically yes. But you’re the one that has to help him mentally and emotionally.” When Tony’s eyes widened up at him, he continued, “he only wants you, Tony.”

“He’s awake?” Tony stood up then, already moving towards the door to Peter’s hospital room.

“No, not yet. What I mean, is...I just know. And so do you. It’s clear how you feel about him,” reaching a hand out and stopping Tony from going in.

“And how is that?” He scoffed, still staring at the door.

“Like a son,” Stephen said it plain and simple, just an obvious fact to him.

He did not confirm or deny the statement, but they both knew the answer, “Can I go in now, or what?”

Knowing he would go in regardless of his answer, the doctor just stepped out of his way, with only a quick warning, “just don’t talk above a low whisper.”

After grumbling an ‘obviously’ under his breath, he finally got to see his kid.

...

Darkness. An abyss of blackness...it’s beautiful. Wait, no. It’s not blackness or even darkness, it’s nothingness. It is bliss. I could float off into it for eternity and everything would be okay.

But then the noises started coming back. But they sounded like I was still underwater. *But, didn’t he take me out of the water? But after that...I closed my eyes. All that came was the nothingness surrounding me. Am I dead? Did I finally do something right?*

The sounds were foggy and unclear, I tried to zone them out, get lost into the perfect abyss. But they insisted on annoying me. They were trying to bring me back. But I don’t want to come back. *Please don’t make me.*

Then it was a voice. I know that voice. It’s a good voice. Would my spidey sense still work in the nothingness? Either way, it’s not sounding. But that voice won’t stop.

In a place so perfectly silent, it makes all these sound so amplified. It’s like that voice is screaming at me. I want it to go away, I need it to go away, but it won’t.

It’s not so much nothingness anymore, and I hate myself for it. Did I ruin this too?

But then the voice started to become less blurred and foggy.

“Peter.”

The voice is saying my name. They’re calling me. I tried to go back into my abyss. But they wouldn’t just quit it.

“Come back.”

*What will happen if I do? Will they hate me too? Will they leave me? Why would someone want me back?*

“I need you.”

*Someone...needs me? Me? Why would anyone need me?*

“Pete...”

*That voice. It's so familiar...*

“Kid...I love you...come back to me.”

That's when I tried to open my eyes. It came as more as a twitch, but it was something.

“Come on Pete, you got it. Give it another try, please.”

*Tony Stark never says please.*

Then my eyes twitched, but I could see the amount of light through my eyelids. Too much. Not dark enough.

I didn't mean to let the whine that came out of my mouth to actually sound, but...

“Friday, turn the lights to Sensory Overload Mode. One more try, buddy, come on. I want to see your big puppy eyes.

My eyelids lifted slowly, carefully. I couldn't make anything out at first.

“Dad...” I whispered, when his face came into focus.

Then everything else hit me at once. The memories, the pain, the realizations. And I clenched my eyes shut the second after, trying to raise my hands to cover them.

*I finally attempted suicide. And I failed.*

Even with my eyes closed as tight as I can, the tears leaked out anyway. That insistent beeping that somehow I didn't register until now began picking up speed.

“Hey, buddy, you're going to be alright,” he tried and failed to calm me down. And that beeping would not just *shut up*, it's like little daggers stabbing me repeatedly in the head.

*But I'm not alright. I never have been and I never will be. I'm so messed up and broken and ruinous and worthless and...and I failed. I couldn't even get it right, I couldn't even kill myself right. How stupid do I have to be to fail that?*

*Why won't all these noises go away?*

I kept my eyes tightly shut, but my breathing became quicker. I just need to stop breathing and then I can go back. I can go back into the nothingness where I belong and everything will be okay.

“Kid, breathe with me, in...out...in, come on kid, out, in...you have to breathe Peter,” his voice is getting more frantic but it needs to go away. He needs to go away.

I know what he's doing. He's trying to make me live, that thought alone made me release a sob. I can't stop crying and I should, I need to.

But then I felt his arms around me. He was hugging me. He initiated a hug with me and that's all I ever wanted.

But now what do I want?

I want the nothingness, I want everything to stop, I want the noises to go away. I want to not be *me*,

I want to go back.

## to cry

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

I tried everything I could sitting in that stupid hospital bed, but I can't just *stop feeling*. I've trained myself to go numb, it's better that way. I can't upset May that way. But May's not here, is she?

I shouldn't feel relieved at that fact.

I tried to find my voice but he probably wouldn't hear me anyway, as my tears would not stop and we were still in the tight embrace.

"Where-where's May?" My voice sounded way too small and scared to be my own.

"Do you want her here?" He asked back, trying to pull back in order to look my in the eye. But I held him close, not yet ready to let him go.

I let a few more tears fall as I shook my head into his chest.

*I just...I can't do it.. I can't see her again. Not now. I can't. She'll be so upset and mad and-and disappointed. She's already been upset enough. I broke her trust. Again. She'll never trust me again and it's my fault. It's my fault. It's always my fault. My fault. My fault. My fault.*

"That's okay," he moved one of his hands up to run his fingers through my hair, "that's okay, Pete. You don't have to want to see her. You have the right to not want to be with her."

*I'm awful. I'm a horrible person. I need to stop crying. I need to stop feeling. But it's not working. Too much of me wants to soak in his warmth. To never let go again.*

After what felt like forever, my tears dried and we pulled back. And I was alright with it. Mostly.

I didn't tell him, but the longer I was awake, and especially after my breakdown, the pain in my head was only increasing. But I couldn't hide it much longer as a bullet of pain shot through my

skull, causing an involuntary whine to escape my lips.

He immediately softened his volume to almost inaudible, “you in pain, Underoos?” I went to nod my head, but it only amplified my hurt.

Without getting off my bed, he leaned over and hit the call nurse button. While he was distracted I took the time to actually look over my body and see the damage I caused. Though there was a blanket over my legs, I felt the stiff casts over them. Thankfully they must have put me on something insanely strong in order to numb my legs that much.

*Numbness. I need the numbness. If I'm numb maybe then I won't hurt anyone anymore. Then I won't be hurt anymore.*

*Every time I let myself feel, something happens. I hurt people, I get in trouble, I get yelled at, I get hurt. My stupid feelings caused that. If I just numbed myself, maybe I wouldn't have jumped.*

*If I'm numb enough maybe I can go back to the nothingness.*

*I'm losing my mind, aren't I?*

“Hello, Peter. How are you feeling?” It was Dr. Strange that addressed me first, even though both him and Dr. Cho came into the room.

*Like death. But I'm not that lucky.*

“Fine,” I mumbled, looking at my lap.

“Now the real answer?” Dr. Cho prodded. “We are only trying to help you, Peter. But that'll be a lot harder if you don't tell us the truth.

*What am I supposed to say?*

“It hurts...” even at a whisper, my voice still broke.

“What exactly hurts?” Dr. Strange stepped forward, I didn't mean to shrink back in on myself. But I couldn't help it.

*I take up too much space. I don't deserve to take up so much room. How can I be such a nothing but take up so much space?*

“Head,” I answered simply, still refusing to meet their eyes.

“Okay, we can fix that,” he sounded so confident.

*But they can't fix the rest of me. I'm too much of a mess. I'm too broken.*

They upped my dose, and they must have gave me something to make me sleep again because the next thing I knew I was yawning. And then my eyes refused to stay open and I didn't try to force them to.

I relished in the fact that I would be submerged back into my nothingness.

...

“How do I help him?” As soon as Peter was asleep, though painfully, Tony stepped out into the hall with the doctors. He quickly motioned Happy over from the waiting area to sit with the kid while they talked. Even if he's asleep, it would be cruel to leave him alone.

“Physically, make sure he rests and actually tells someone if he's in pain. But mentally... he needs to get help. As in professional help,” Dr. Cho answered, not saying anything Tony didn't already know.

“That would imply Peter would actually talk to a therapist. The kid barely even talks to me,” he ran another hand down his face, trying so hard to not break his confident mask again.

“So start there. Help him get more comfortable with you. And *then* talk to him about seeing a



therapist. Take this one step at a time,” Dr. Cho put a comforting hand on his shoulder.

“Listening and being there for him can go a long way. I know you'll do what's right, Tony,” Dr. Strange finally added to the conversation.

Though he didn't say it, Tony could not get the fears out of his head. The fears on if they will have enough time to take it only one step at a time. All the what if's would not stop storming through his head, tearing away his sanity.

“Thank you,” he let out a breath before turning back to sit next to Peter again. But he paused when he saw Happy sitting there, apologizing to the kid.

“Kid...I'm-I'm *so* sorry I didn't listen to you. That I ignored the signs. That I didn't try to help you more,” he let out a shakier breath, “but I'll do better now. I'll listen to you no matter how annoyed I may get. And I'll be there for you. Whenever you need me.”

Tony had never seen Happy cry before.

## Chapter End Notes

Why am I not allowed to feel? I am punished and yelled at for feeling. If I laugh too loud, I get yelled at. If I show even the smallest bit of anger or annoyance I get yelled at, or made guilty for it. If I'm scared I need to just suck it up. If I ever want anything I am greedy. If I cry I am overreacting, or 'what I perceive as reality is not real, and that's my fault'. Or I am guilted out of feeling. Because if I'm in such a 'loving home' why should I ever be upset or cry or be angry?

You know, I thought I was getting better. I really did. But then I noticed, I realized that every time I feel an emotion too strongly I have been forcing myself to shut down. To go numb. To finally not feel. Because that's what they want, right? An easily controllable emotionless thing.

But I hate this so much. I want to feel. But I'm not allowed.

# options

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The next time consciousness started to steal me back, I refused to open my eyes. I refused to let it win.

But I could still hear the heart monitor, and the beeping was picking up its pace.

“Kid, I know you're awake. You can open your eyes, no one's gonna hurt you,” Tony's soft voice barely sounded over the unending beeping.

I groaned as I opened my eyes. *I let consciousness win.*

“Hey buddy, how do you feel?” He looked so genuine. *How?*

I had to bite my lip to keep from saying ‘fine’. “It doesn't hurt as much,” I decided on saying. *At least physically it hurts less. Will the emotional pain ever cease? Will it ever even improve? It would be a surprise to me if it could.*

“That's good. That's really good,” and he smiled so big. I couldn't stand looking at him *so happy* when I'm so...like me.

“What happens now?” I asked, my voice taking that same quietness it's adopted recently.

He took a breath, “well, we wait for your legs and head to heal. The head should be good in a few days. The legs, however, will take a little longer.”

*What about everything else? That's what really matters.*

*But I don't matter. So does my mental health and stability?*

The fact that I question it should be my answer.

*But should it?*

Yes.

*I...I really am going to lose my mind, aren't I?*

“What are you thinking, Underoos?” He asked gently, his eyes too soft to look at the likes of me.

I shrugged.

“Kid...” he took on a more somber tone, “you do know that you can *always* talk to me, about *anything*. Anything and everything ranging from how your day was, to what you're thinking, to how to do something. Literally anything and I won't be upset.”

*But how do I tell him that I crave the nothingness? That I only know how to cope in the 'least healthy' ways? That I comfort myself in the fact that I could just end it? That I'm terrified that if I try, I'll just fail again? I'll hurt everyone again and again and I don't deserve them and this sucks but there's no way out. There's no way to escape and I need to, I need to but there's no way. How can I escape when everyone is standing in front of the door? When everyone won't let me do what I need to survive? What am I supposed to do next? Tell me. I need to know. I need to-*

“Hey, hey, breathe with me. In and out. Here, feel my heartbeat. Yeah, that's it, listen to that. Follow what I do, in...out...in, yeah that's it, out...come on Pete, in...out, perfect...in....out...just a few more...in...out...in...out. There.”

*How can he stay through my panics? How can he not see me as I am? As a worthless piece of crap that doesn't even deserve to be hated by him, let alone...*

*No. That had to have been a lie. It has to. There's no way...*

*But he said he would never lie to me.*

*But...he said a lot of things.*

“Hey kid,” I recognized the voice at the first word. But I was not prepared to look up at Happy and see his eyes all red and puffy.

*Did...did I cause that?*

*But he never seemed to...he never seemed to like me. He apologized, yeah, but this... crying over me ? That's...that's impossible.*

But then I looked back at my Da-Mr. Stark, and I noticed his eyes matched Happy’s. How did I not notice that before?

“Hey-hi, Happy,” I didn't dare look back at his puffy eyes. My eyes belong looking down.

He opened and closed his mouth a couple times, seemingly unsure what to say next. And it's not like I should start up another conversation. I've already said too much.

Luckily we were saved by Dr. Strange walking into the room.

“Hello, Peter, I’m just here to check back over everything and make sure it's all how it should be.”

*And how is that?*

He gently lifted the blanket covering my broken body and looked at my legs. This is when I finally got a chance to see the damage. They looked so... *fragile*. And I hate them for it.

I didn't bother paying attention to everything else he did. But it could not be over quick enough. He said something about everything looking good, which I took as a lie, and I asked no questions before he left.

*What happens next?* That question kept echoing through my head again and again. *What do you do once you've ruined your entire life?*

And what about May? I mean, I would *love* to just *not* tell her about everything. About what I did. Or, rather, attempted to do. But is that right?

But after everything she did to me...I should be allowed to keep this from her. She doesn't deserve to see that part of me too. Not after she reacted to everything else. That would just be stupid of me. I'm stupid. So, so, stupid. But I know a little better now.

*But what am I supposed to do?* Just suffer more? Let my mental stability completely diminish? Try to kill myself again? That... that just...I don't even know. I'm not allowed to cut anymore, which just, that takes away yet another of my ways to cope. And going numb, it's wonderful when I'm feeling all the bad things. But those rare times when I could feel the good things, the numbness can take it away. But what else is there to do?

I can't just *talk* to Mr. Stark. No. I can't put this on him. I can't do that to him. It's not like I can talk to Happy either. And talking to May?... I'd rather run away and starve to death.

## Chapter End Notes

My brother proposed today, and my other brother will propose soon too. I'm excited, of course, but I'm also terrified. When they both went to college and I was alone with my parents. I have never been more suicidal and I cut more than ever. Now I'm going to be alone again and I can't do this. I love both of their girlfriends but I'm so scared.

## to stop

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Tony never told Peter that he made sure that someone was always at his bedside. He never told Peter that he has not cried so much in...has he ever cried this much? He didn't tell Peter that when he is unconscious he holds his hand and begs him to hold on. He never told him that that was the first time he's ever seen Happy cry. That's he's never seen Happy beg for forgiveness before.

Happy never told Peter that for the first time, he didn't care that someone saw him cry. He never told Peter that he's been having nightmares about him committing suicide. That he makes Tony give him daily updates if he's not there. And that he's rarely ever not there.

Steven Strange never told Peter that he's never seen Stark so scared. He's never seen Stark like this. So terrified for his child. That he, if he did not know better, would think that Peter is Tony's biological son. That they practically are father and son.

Helen Cho never told Peter that she has to check on Tony to make sure he isn't passing out. That she found out from Friday that Tony's heart actually fluttered when he found out what happened to Peter. That she was worried she would have to knock out Tony to make him sleep.

Tony never told Peter that he brags about him to Pepper every time they talk. That the way he talks about him is like a proud father talking about his son. That he doesn't mind when Pepper jokes about Peter being his son. That Peter being his son... just sounds right.

Peter will never know how many nights Tony can't sleep because he's either too desperate to stay by his side or too terrified to. Peter will never know that Tony has been having nightmares of Peter dying since the battle at the airport.

He never heard any of that.

They never told Peter the specifics.

He'll never know how much he is loved.

And maybe that's the problem.

...

"Tony," she let out a breath of relief once seeing him.

"Pepper? What? What are you doing here?" He stood up, not bothering to let go of Peter's hand while he slept.

"I heard what happened," once seeing his face pale, she quickly amended her statement, "I heard that Peter is in the hospital and that you refuse to take care of yourself."

"So you don't know what...what happened to cause him to be in the hospital?" He couldn't help but look over at Peter and think how he would react if he knew Pepper found out. He's never even met Pepper in person before.

"No," she answered simply.

"It's not my story to tell. But I appreciate you coming, Pep," he reluctantly let go of Peter's hand in order to go over and hug his fiancé. "But I'll talk to him," he added on after embracing.

...

It's really weird. It's like a dream, that's the best way I can think of to explain it. Like I'm watching myself going through the motions. I'm not really living if it feels like this, right? It's like I have some idea on what is happening, but I'm not really living it.

It's different than being numb, this is a whole other level. I'm not even sure what caused it. My body doesn't feel real. Like I try to make it do something and it tries, but it doesn't work out the way I thought it would. And it's not like the numbness in the fact were, yes I can't feel, but this is like an unusual calmness. In every way I think of it, it is like I'm dreaming.

But this is real life? Maybe? Mr. Stark is here. And he's talking, but it sounds like he's talking through water.

“I want to talk to you about something.”

I know I should be panicking. If I wasn't so *gone* I would be panicking. But I tried to nod, I'm not sure if I did. I know that this isn't right, but I don't know how to stop it.

*Do I want to?*

My body feels like it's floating, kind of like in the blissful nothingness. But my body is here. Tony is still talking. Something about Pepper. I should be terrified. But all I feel is my body floating and my mind in that eerie calmness.

I vaguely remembered something I read about coming back when you're floating off. It was about the senses, noting everything you see, touch, hear and so on.

I see Tony. I see my hands. My hand is scratching at my arm but I can't feel it. I know I should, it's a weird sensation. I see Tony's hand grabbing my hand. I try to think about how it should feel. But that's not what I feel. I see him frown. I hear him talking but his words are not really making sense to me.

I know this isn't right but I don't really feel like trying to come back.

He was still talking, and talking, and talking, but I wasn't sure how to respond. How do I talk to him? What facial expressions am I supposed to make? I'm not even sure what expression I am making.

Then I saw him grab me by the shoulders. Speaking. Speaking. Speaking. I should be able to understand it.

“Can you feel?” What is his tone?

*No. Not really. I should be trying to not float off. But I don't know how? Maybe this will just fade away?*



Then I saw Pepper Potts in the doorway. She was smiling. I tried to tell my brain to tell my mouth to smile back, but I don't think it worked. I know I know she is strong and an icon and beautiful but no real thoughts are coming to my brain, let alone words.

I should be scared. But I'm not. I know I should be though. But just because I know something doesn't mean I feel it. Maybe I'm confused. I'm just...curious I guess. As to why I feel like this. And why it is happening.

“Hi, Peter,” her muddled voice came through.

“Hi,” I got out somehow. I don't know if I said that right, how loud I was, or what tone I had.

“Pepper, can I talk to you for a sec?” He got up, but he looked back at me before he left. I should be upset. I should be scared. But I'm not.

And I don't know how to stop it.

## Chapter End Notes

I dissociated yesterday at school for three periods, so I was trying to write what it felt like. I've gone numb for hours at a time, but I have never been that gone, and it has never felt like that before.

## for balloons to pop

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

It's a strange feeling, to say the least. It's kind of like my body is filled with balloons. They grow so big and take up so much room that there's not enough room for anything else. It's just the voids that the balloons make. They are colorful and bright and they look so harmless. But they keep growing until I just float away.

But then they shrunk. They became smaller, slowly, more room for emotion and thoughts and feelings. They did not pop. I'm glad the balloons did not pop because it would be like being thrown into freezing water. I wouldn't be ready for it.

It would be like when the Vulture dropped me in the lake. It was *so cold* and even if I wanted to I wouldn't have even able to swim. It hurt *so bad* before I even got close to being numb.

...

“*What?*” Though they both knew that Tony would never hurt Pepper, that did not stop how dangerous his voice sounded.

“I’m sorry Tony but-” but he didn’t let her finish.

“No. Pepper, no. I’m *not* leaving him,” he left no room for argument, yet she continued.

“It’s just a night Tony,” she softened her voice.

That did not lesson his defiance, “And the last time I wasn’t there for him he tried to...I’m not leaving him.”

She placed her hands on his shoulders, “You can’t always be here...”

“I will for as long as I can.”

“Fine, Tony. But there will be a time, sooner than you’ll like, that you’ll have to go.”

“I know.”

...

That was the moment in which I felt all the balloons pop. All the pain and fear and anxiety and *pain and pain and pain and I can't escape I can't I can't I can't.*

With my stupid legs I can't get up. Though my head doesn't hurt at all anymore. I physically can't even escape. There's no way out. There never was, was there?

Even in a 'safe place' I'm not safe. I never am. *There's nothing I can do.*

*I'm trapped. I can't do anything.*

*Well...one thing.*

“Friday?” I asked, meekly.

“Yes, Master Parker?” Her voice was so *calm* and I hated her for it.

“Where's Tony?”

“He is talking to Miss Potts. Would you like me to alert him?”

*Now or never, right?*

“Yeah...”

...

“Master Stark,” Friday interrupted Tony and Pepper’s talk.

“Yeah Fri?” He couldn't keep the frustration out of his words.

“Master Parker requests your presence.”

That's all she had to say for him to start running down the hall.

...

Waiting. Waiting. Waiting. It felt like an eternity. But he came. He *came*.

I almost broke out into a smile. But I think I’m too broken to do that. If I push it, I’ll shatter again.

“Hey, Pete, how are you feeling?” He tries not to ask yes or no questions anymore because he already knows the answer.

“I’m fine.” *I’m doing a little better since you’re here.*

“How are you really feeling?” He lowered his voice, as he sat on the bed next to me. I had been moved to my bedroom to help me ‘be more comfortable’, but I still can’t get up on my own yet.

I shrugged, even though I know I’m not supposed to.

“What do you want to do?” He asked in such a gentle voice.

“Can we just...sit here?” I probably look like a scared puppy.

“Of course, kid,” he wrapped his arm around me and pulled me close. And it was *nice*.

But then his phone buzzed. And reality reminded me that I don’t deserve comfort. But he didn’t pick it up. I watched him. But he didn’t even twitch. But then it buzzed again, and he did open it. But he quickly put it away. It’s Pepper. She needs him. He’ll choose her. He’ll always choose her. That’s how it’s meant to be. That’s reality.

I looked up at him, and he answered my unsaid question.

“I’m here. I’m staying here, this is our time.” But I know that’s not reality.

His phone buzzed again. And he didn’t open it. Then again. And he didn’t open it.

Then Friday spoke up, “Miss Potts requests you, Boss.”

He looked apologetic and maybe that’s what hurt me even more, “I’m sorry Pete. She’s scaring me, I have to check on her.”

I watched him leave. I waited until I couldn’t hear his footsteps anymore.

That’s when I broke. Again. Always again. That’s reality. I let out a sob. It was ugly and broken and messed up and so... *me*.

I let my tears fall freely as I laid down. And I didn’t plan on getting up.

*Never.*

*The answer is always never and I am an idiot to think differently.*

I'm sorry guys. I wanted to update ealier. I wanted to give a longer chapter. I wanted to give a happier chapter. I wanted to give hope. But it's so hard to give hope when I have none. This scenario, this happened to me. I needed my brother, but his girlfriend needed him too. And he chose her. He always chose her. And he always will.

# hope

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

I don't care how long I laid there. I don't care how long I cried for. But he came back. And I wiped my tears and I *smiled* at him. It wasn't real. It's never real. I can't remember the last time it was real.

He said he would always be here for me. He said he would never leave me. But he chose her. He should. That's how it's meant to be. *But that doesn't mean it doesn't hurt.*

"Hey kid, sorry about that," he smiled back at me. *He doesn't even notice that I've been crying.*

Though it tasted like acid in my mouth, I asked, "is Miss Potts okay?"

"Just call her Pepper," he rolled his eyes fondly at me, "and yeah. She just needed some help with something." *But I needed you too.*

*But that's selfish. I'm selfish.*

*I need to leave.*

"When can I get up?" That took him by surprise.

"Soon. Stephen-Dr. Strange said in about a week you should bet your casts off." *But that's not enough.*

"Then what? I haven't been to school in...I'm not even sure how long. And I can't stay here, and-" he was quick to stop me.

"Who says you can't stay here?" He looked so genuinely confused and it made me want to scream, or maybe cry. *It's so obvious.*

“I’m not your kid,” I was about to continue but the look of horrifying pain that crossed his face made me shut up. Though it’s a fact we both know, he looked like I just hit him across the face. *I hurt him again.* “I’m sorry, I’m sorry I shouldn’t have said that. *This* is why I have to go. I can’t stay here. I just mess everything up and I hurt you and I hurt you and I cause way more trouble than I’m worth.”

“Kid, you are worth more than I could ever give you.” *You could let me die.*

“I don’t belong here,” I just wouldn’t *shut up* even though I know it’s better to talk less because it’s better to not say anything than to say too much and hurt people or worse, to say something I’ll regret.

“Where do you belong?” He asked, his voice just above a whisper. He wouldn’t look at me. *I don’t deserve his gaze.*

*I don’t really deserve to die, do I? I deserve to suffer.*

*I don’t belong here, I don’t belong at Aunt May’s, I don’t belong anywhere. I belong dead in a grave, but he won’t let that happen. Why won’t he let that happen?*

*Wait. He has to leave? Doesn’t he? Is to why he’s here?*

“You’re going to leave me. And I’m going to be alone again. I-” I had to look up to keep the tears from falling. *I’m so weak.* “It’s better for me to not get so attached when I’m just going to lose you.”

...

There was nothing that could prepare Tony for Peter’s words. Any of them.

“Okay, Peter, I need to know you’re listening. Come on, can you make eye contact with me?” he sat right next to him, and put his fingers under his chin to lift his head to finally meet Tony’s eyes, “yes, it is true that I have to leave sometimes. But I always come back. Always. And when I’m gone, I *promise* that you will never be alone again. The team, they’re my family, and now they’re yours. I know you met most of them back at the airport, but you don’t really know any of them but me and Happy. But I can help you start to. Okay, before you start to worry, we can start small. Just



meet one of them if you want to. Is there anyone on the team you want to meet?"

After a moment of pondering he finally answered with that tiny voice, "I'd like to meet Captain America again."

"Of course you would," though I rolled my eyes at him I couldn't help but to smile.

But of course his mind has to put doubts in everything, "but I don't think Mr. Wilson or Sergeant Barnes like me."

"They just don't know you. But I promise you everyone will love you. It's not like they're scary, well Nat is but that's a different kind of scary. And Wanda's not even that much older than you." He tried to assure the boy. "And Kid? Can you quit it with all these formal titles. My name is Tony, just call me that."

"Okay Mr...Tony..." somehow he managed to smile and wince at the same time. That was the first real smile Tony had seen out of his kid in way too long.

"How about when you're out of the casts I'll help you meet Steve?"

"Okay, Tony." And Tony ruffled his hair in response to that.

## Chapter End Notes

So now both of my brothers have proposed four days apart. After this summer I'll be alone with my parents again. And I'm terrified.

.  
. .  
. .  
. .

So in this, I'm doing it were Civil War did happen, the battle at the airport happened, but it ended peacefully. Everyone is still a big happy family. This is set a little after Homecoming.

## to meet a friend

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

It was a relatively quick recovery, to the surprise of the doctors. Even when they finally took the casts off, they expected to have to do physical therapy, but my legs look like nothing had happened to them. As if I never jumped. Though I was a bit wobbly on my legs at first, and needed some support from Mr. St-from Tony, I got it. I'm on my feet again. My body is finally fine.

But the one good thing about the broken legs is that if I jostled them a little, they would hurt. It was a lot easier to get that pain. It'll be a lot more difficult now.

*Now I get to meet Captain America. I mean, I didn't have a terrible first impression. But I did steal his shield. But he punched me in the face. That hurt. But I think I impressed him. A little. Maybe.*

...

“Okay Steve, the thing about Peter is...he gets really scared and insecure. So just be you're kind, heroic, self to him. We can't let him get the idea that you don't like him,” Tony was being more serious than Steve had ever seen him.

“Why wouldn't I like him?” Steve asked, genuinely wondering.

“Well after the airport-” Steve cut him off to Tony's frustration.

“Wait, he's Spider-Man right?” At Tony's nod, he continued, “Why would he think I don't like him, I'm the one that punched him.”

Tony stopped abruptly, turning to stand in front of Steve, “wait. You punched my kid?” Even Steve had to take a double take when he heard the fierce protectiveness in Tony's voice.

“It was just enough to knock him down, he wasn't hurt,” he raised his hands in submission.

“If you hurt him I would kill you,” the scary thing was, was that he sounded serious. But he quickly whipped back around and marched straight to Peter's room, not bothering to wait for the Captain.

## Chapter End Notes

I'm so sorry, I wanted to post a longer chapter but then I started to break down again. Guys, I just don't understand how so many strangers can seem to care about me. I'm sorry, maybe it's just my anxiety talking, but it doesn't make sense that you guys can actually care. Then again when isn't it my anxiety or my depression talking? My story is absolute crap and I'm a worthless piece of crap too. But I do really appreciate all of your support. Even if it means nothing to you, which is likely, it means the world to me.

I'm sorry. I'm so sorry. But I don't understand. If not even my family can accept me how can you guys? I have been made fun of and gotten yelled at my entire life for having anxiety. Every single person in my family has yelled at me because I have asked them to order food for me or to ask a question for me because I'm panicking because I was born with anxiety and I don't know why. Crap...I'm crying now. But I have to finish this. I have hated myself since third grade. I realized in kindergarten that there's something wrong with me. But I really began hating myself since third grade. That's when I found out that even my mom is not proud of how I look. In fifth grade was when I realized I'm stupid. In sixth grade I started to wish I was born into a different family. In eighth grade was when I got depression and I've had it ever since. It got so severe I couldn't even get out of bed but my dad would yell at me for needing to miss school. He would force me to go. I started to self harm in eighth grade too. And after self harming for almost a year my parents found out. And then...we'll chapter one explains how they reacted. What May said, that's quotes from them. They made me apologize for 'hurting them'. I broke. They made fun of my anxiety my whole life, they yelled at me for my depression, they are one of the biggest reasons I know I'm hideous, they are disappointed in me because of how stupid I am, and I finally try to cope, and I had to apologize to them.

I'm sorry I just can't understand how my parents and my older brother can make fun of a child for their anxiety. I feel like I'm going to throw up. I shouldn't be freaking out this much.

## a good impression

*I'm about to meet Captain America. I'm about to meet The Captain America. I mean, I've already met him once, but that was at the airport and I stole his shield. And what if he hates me for fighting him, for taking Tony's side? What if-*

But my thoughts got cut short when Tony barged into my room. Though he smiled at me when he came in, I could see how tense he is. But then I heard the other footsteps coming. *Captain America is coming to my room. Captain America is coming here right now!*

"Kid I would like to introduce you to Steve," Tony announced as soon as The Captain America entered my room, though it did sound like forced enthusiasm.

"Hey-Hi Mr Captain America, sir! I-I'm a big fan! Oh-I-I already told you that last time didn't I? Sorry, I'm sorry, I'll shut up now." *I'm so stupid.*

"Hello Peter," he greeted me with a kind smile, "but just call me Steve."

"Yes sir-Steve. Yes, Steve," I rapidly nodded my head.

"Oh come on!" Tony exclaimed exasperatedly. "It took a *year* to get you to call me Tony but Steve only has to ask you once!"

*Stupid, stupid, stupid, I'm so stupid!*

"He likes me better," Steve smirked, trying to dissolve any left over awkwardness. As if I'm not already a super awkward person. Yet, there's definitely some tension between the two heroes.

"Yeah whatever, I'll leave you to it," Tony pointedly looked at Steve, something was being said in that glare and I couldn't figure out what, "tell Friday to get me if you need anything," that time he looked at me, his voice softening.

I nodded, watching Tony walk out of the room. Just me and Steve left. What am I supposed to say to The Steve Rogers?

He took his time sitting down in my desk chair and settling himself. I quickly cast my eyes down before he could feel my stare, that would be *so* awkward.

“-ter? Peter? Hey, are you alright?” *I just zoned out in front of Captain America.*

“I’m sorry, I’m sorry I zoned out, I didn’t mean to, I’m sorry,” I’m always so quick to apologize.

“It’s alright, are you okay?” He seemed so worried and I don’t understand.

“I’m fine!” I responded too strongly. *Always too much yet always never enough.*

“Peter, you don’t have to worry about me not liking you. I already like you,” he tried to assure me. *How does he know what I’m scared about? Did...did Tony tell him? He wouldn’t...no, he knows that’s what May did. She told people about my life without my consent.*

“I just didn’t think that after what happened at the airport that you would want to see me,” I mumbled, truthfully. *There was no way Tony told him, right?*

“I’m the one that punched you, why would I be mad at you?” He seemed so confused and how am I supposed to respond to that?

“But I sided with Tony and Sergeant Barnes didn’t like me and-” he looked so shocked and I don’t understand why.

“When did you interact with Bucky?” He asked, leaning forward a little.

“When I was at the airport I was supposed to slow you guys down and so I started fighting Sergeant Barnes and Mr. Wilson. But Sergeant Barnes tried to punch me and I caught it but he seemed really freaked out that I caught his punch,” I finally succeeded in cutting my rambling shorter.

“Wait you caught one of Bucky’s punches?” He let out a laugh, startling me. He seemed quite assumed at the idea of a kid catching one of the ex-Winter Soldiers punches.

“Yeah, I did! And I told him that his metal arm is awesome! But he seemed even more freaked out...” I shouldn’t have said that last part.

“Yeah,” he rubbed the back of his neck, “that makes sense,” he smiled sheepishly, looking strange on such a heroic man.

“Hey my voice is not that high!” I really wish my voice hadn’t cracked right then.

...

“He’s talking to *Steve*, Pep!” Tony ran a hand down his face while he complained to his fiancée.

“But you and Steve already worked everything out. After the fight, you guys talked it through. Things were getting better,” she ran her fingers through his hair.

“I *know*, Pep. But that was before I knew that Steve had punched Peter!” Fury still raced through his veins.

She allowed herself a moment of shock and a moment to recollect herself before talking again, still in that calming tone, “it was a fight, Tony. He didn’t know that Peter’s a kid.”

“He’s my kid,” he murmured back.

“I know Tony, I know,” she continued running her fingers through his hair.

## outside help

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Even a good day can turn around in just seconds. A good day can quickly turn to a bad one. And a bad day can turn to a couple bad days, which can turn to a bad week. Does it ever end?

I met Captain America. No. I met Steve Rogers. I should be glowing with joy. I should be radiating happiness. But I'm just not. And not all the kind words in the universe can seem to change the way my mind thinks. No matter what anyone in the world says, my mind always screams louder. Yet all the bad words, everything that I know I shouldn't listen to, that's all that sticks in my mind. My mind agrees with them. And shouldn't I listen to my mind?

"Kid, you okay?" Tony tried to cut my thoughts off. It just doesn't work like that. Reality says differently. Reality. How do I know what reality is?

My mind says reality is what it says. That I'm a burden, that I don't deserve to get help because other people need it more. That calling a hotline would be selfish because there's other people who need it more urgently. That I just add weight to anyone I confide in.

But that's true, isn't it? The bags under Tony's eyes are so much deeper than they used to be. Even Steve Rogers seemed concerned for me. That isn't right.

But Tony says that I am loved. But if I'm loved, why don't I feel it? That's selfish, isn't it? If I'm lucky enough to be loved I should feel it. But if I can't even feel it, I don't deserve to have it. But that's assuming I have love in the first place.

Assumptions. Life is made of assumptions. It's like everything people assume about me is wrong. If they assume I'm fine, I'm not. If they assume the worst...is that right? Is this the worst it could be? No. There's always someone that has it worse off.

...

Tony ran a hand over his face, every instinct in his body to just get a drink and forget for a little bit. But he still didn't.

“He’s getting worse again, and I don’t know why,” his voice sounded so *broken*. That voice didn’t belong coming from the Tony Stark, yet it did.

“I know, Tony. But you’re doing everything you can,” Pepper tried to comfort him.

“Am I? Because it feels like we are back to where we started and I *don’t know why*?” He didn’t mean to raise his voice. Yet it happened.

“Tony, don’t yell at me,” that stern, get pained, remark from Pepper is what snapped him back.

“I’m sorry, Pep,” he held her hand, “I didn’t...I can’t keep going through the motions with him. He just keeps getting worse.”

Her answer was simple, “then don’t. Don’t go through the motions. Change something.”

“What do you mean,” he shook his head in confusion.

“Come on genius, there has to be something you can think of,” she smiled at him. The smile still looked sad though.

“What if Wanda came and tried to help figure this out?” He suggested.

“Would he go for that?” Pepper asked.

“Probably not, but what else can we do?”

...

“Pete, you didn’t answer the question. How are you feeling?” Tony asked me again. *He’s mad. I ignored him. I’m wasting his time.*



*I'm not okay. When was the last time I was okay?*

I shrugged, knowing better than that but also not knowing how else to respond.

“Okay. Okay kid...so I have something I want to ask you?” He sounded so hesitant.

*He's mad. I knew he would be. He'll want me to leave. But-but I can't go back to May. I can't. I just can't go back there with her. I can't be left alone with her again. That can't happen.*

“Pete, hey. It's not anything bad, alright. Do you remember Wanda, she was on Cap's team at the airport. She's not too much older than you. But... I think she can help. Would you like to meet her?” *Wait, what?*

“What do you mean ‘help’?” I asked, my voice doing that shaking thing again. As usual. I guess that's just how I speak now.

“She...we can get into that later. But first I'd like you to meet her. Just meet her. Then from there we can figure out what to do next,” he avoided my question. *Why won't he tell me? Why won't he tell me what's going on?*

## Chapter End Notes

Hey... I didn't think I'd be back, that I would continue this story. But here I am. Thanks to KrisGomez07 for reaching out to me again, I went back I reread every single one of the comments you guys have ever left on this story. And after everything...here I am.

So I want to ask you guys, some of you actually seem to care somehow, do you want me to continue with the authors notes as I was doing before? Saying how I vent into Peter and talking about myself in the authors notes? Because I feel like I should stop with the authors notes, but when I reread everything a few of you said you liked to read them. So yeah...Thank you guys...for everything.

# laughter

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

I'm meeting Wanda today. I should be open minded, I know. It's not like I'm scared of her at all, I'm not. We barely even interacted at the airport. But Tony wouldn't even tell me why he wants me to talk to her. Talking to Steve was my choice. This isn't. He's making me talk to her and he won't even tell me why.

But I have to admit, she is really cool. She can do like, *anything* and it's insanely amazing.

*Wait, she can mess with minds. Does Tony want her to mess with my mind? What does he want her to do to me?*

"Hey Pete, you ready to meet Wanda?" Tony knocked on my door before entering and speaking. *But do I really have a choice?*

"I guess..." I breathed out.

He put a hand on my back, I didn't mind, and he led me to a common room. And she was sitting there. Even though she was just wearing normal clothes and her hair was kinda messy, I was still taken aback by her beauty.

"Hey, Peter. It's nice to meet you," it took a second to register her strong accent, but I quickly shook her outstretched hand.

"I'll leave you to it," Tony seemed surprisingly calm about leaving me alone with her. Though the team is together and most of the tension is gone, it was still surprising.

We both watched him walk away, both of us waiting for the other to speak up. She broke the silence, "you don't have to be scared, Peter."

I didn't mean for my eyes to widen so much, "I-I'm not scared, I mean I'm not scared *of you*, oh god that sounded horrible. What I mean is Tony just suddenly told me to meet you and I don't know why and it's scary because I don't know what he wants and I'm sorry. I'm sorry." *I'm so so*

*stupid.*

“I understand,” she smiled at me. And for the first time recently, when I saw a smile it wasn't filled with that pity or sadness, but understanding. And I smiled back. And it was real. “So what do you like to do, Peter?” She plopped down on the overly plush couch.

That's not what I was expecting her first question to be. I thought it would be about...everything. Or about my powers or the airport. But it's just about me, Peter Parker. She wants to know Peter Parker.

“Um, I like Legos?” That came out too much like a question. I sat down next to her.

“Oh, I've never used Legos before,” she laughed lightly.

“Really?” I asked incredulously, “Well they are amazing and you need to try it,” I told her matter of factly. *I haven't talked like this in so long...so normally. So free. It's nice. It's easy with her. To be so normal. It's like I actually have a friend.*

“We should,” she agreed, still smiling at me. It wasn't even a forced smile, she made it look so easy.

“Oh!” I remembered suddenly, “Tony had gotten me some Legos a little while ago, I think they're in my room. We can go do that, if you want of course.”

“Yeah, that sounds wonderful,” and we stood up and went to my room.

...

“Where's Peter?”

“Good Afternoon to you too, Cap,” Tony halfheartedly remarked. It was clear that Steve was surprised to see Tony not glued to Peter's side.

“Good afternoon,” Steve almost smiled but worry was too evident on his features. “But where is Peter?”

“I’m not with him all the time,” Tony went so far as to roll his eyes, “He’s with Wanda right now.”

Steve’s eyebrows raised, “he knows Wanda? What are they doing?”

“They’re allowed to be friends. I thought she could...help him,” even he struggled to hide the awkwardness at his own vagueness.

“Help him how?” Now the Captain was beginning to sound challenging, a strange protectiveness coming into his tone.

“The kid needs a friend around his age. Someone else on the team he can just hang out with,” Tony was quick to come back with. Because why would he tell all his reasons to Steve?

...

“Am I doing this right?” Wanda laughed as she struggled to piece the Lego starship together.

“Yeah! You’re doing great!” I encouraged as I laughed too, though I did reach out and replace one of the pieces she had done incorrectly.

“I am doing it wrong!” She accused, failing to hide her further laughter. It’s weird to be *so happy*. I know it won’t last, but I’m allowed to relish in it while I can, right? It’s like I’m a normal kid for once. Maybe that’s why Tony wants us to talk. But I have to admit...this is nice.

## Chapter End Notes

So I guess I'm writing authors notes. If you don't like them, don't read them. If you do read them, thank you.

So yeah, I've had one of the worst weeks of my life. But I'm really hoping this year goes better. 2018 sucked. But I have hope for 2019. So to hope, I guess.

## a look through the mind

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

*If I cut again, what would Tony do? Would he be angry? Disappointed? Would he send me back to May? If I cut would that be betraying him? I don't want to hurt him but I also know I can't keep on surviving without my blade. Even just knowing I have it can be enough to calm me down. Having the choice, that helps. Just knowing I can, can be enough.*

“Hi,” it was simple, but hearing his voice caused my head to snap up.

“Happy?” *Why is he here?*

“It's not like I don't visit you, why are you so surprised?” Though he chuckled I know I must have offended him. I always just annoy him. *That's why he didn't pick me up the day May found out...*

“It-it's just that I haven't seen you in a little while,” and that is what caused his gaze to turn sad. I made him sad. *I don't deserve him to be here.*

*If I keep hanging out with Wanda, will I make her sad too? Will I upset her too? Anger her? Annoy her? I have with everyone else, why would she be any different?*

“I know kid, I wish I could come visit you more but I just...it's busy,” he sighed. I couldn't help but think of a quote I read once, it was something like it's not a matter of business but of priority. *I'm not Happy's priority. Why would I be?* “So kid, me and the boss were thinking that it would be good for you to get out of here and get some fresh air.”

“You want me to leave?” My voice quivered. *This is it. This is when they kick me out...I knew it would happen soon.*

“No, kid, we mean to just go and have some fun. We aren't making you leave here, just to go to a restaurant or a park or something. Boss, um Tony, said that Wanda can come too if you want her to.” *Would Wanda even want to come?* “How does that sound?”

“Good, that sounds good.” *But why do we have to go? Why doesn't he want me to stay here? Well I*

*mean I know why he doesn't want me, but I didn't even really do anything so why does he suddenly want me out?*

...

“So how did it go with Peter?” Tony could not wait to talk to Wanda about how it went.

“It went good,” she smiled, “he’s very nice and very funny.”

“But does he trust you?” Tony pressed.

“Stark, you make it sound like you want me to do something bad. We did not talk about anything of too much depth, but he does seem to see me as a friend. I’m not going to hurt him. You’re the one to ask me to look through his mind, anyway,” she noted.

“I know, I know. I just don’t want him to feel like we don’t trust him or that we want to hurt him,” he sighed.

“Are you going to tell him what you plan on me doing?” She asked.

“Maybe. I don’t know. Probably not. Will he wake up if you do it while he’s asleep?” He questioned back.

“I don’t think that’s best. If he does wake up, or if he finds out I went into his mind without his consent he could lose all trust in us,” she concluded.

He sighed again, “you’re right. We can’t do that. Maybe today, whether or not if he asks for you to come to the city, we can talk to him about it,” it came out almost as a question.

“Asking is the best way to go about this,” she agreed, putting a hand on his shoulder.

I don't even know

## casual conversation

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The city lights are so much brighter than I remembered. And it's so *loud*. I've lived here my entire life and it feels like I'm not the same person that lived here. It's like the last few weeks have erased the Peter that lived here for fifteen years. But I don't like that old Peter.

Wanda's here. I know Tony said she could come but what if he's upset I wanted her here too? That it's not just an us thing? But then again Happy is here too, but that's kind of a given. I didn't think Tony was close with Wanda but I can't feel any tension between them like with Tony and Steve.

"Where are we going, Stark?" Wanda asked again after the long ride to the city was finally ending.

I hate how my chest tightens every foot we get closer to this place.

"I already told you it's a surprise," he laughed. He tried to hide his worry, but it was there. *Am I worrying him?*

*I mean I know he worries about me but what about this is putting him on edge?*

That thought only made my chest tighten even more, making it even harder to breathe.

"Peter, are you okay?" Wanda whispered at a volume she knew only I could hear. But even if she said it a bit louder Tony and Happy probably wouldn't have heard us anyway since we're in the back row.

I just nodded vaguely, knowing she'd see it. I know she didn't believe me, but she stayed quiet.

*I've already ruined everything. She was the one person that treated me normally and now I ruined it. I ruin everything. She'll see how broken I am. I knew it was just a matter of time but I hoped it wouldn't happen so soon.*



*I hoped. That's the problem. I actually let myself hope for something I knew wouldn't go well. Every single time I hope I get hurt and disappointed. Every time. And yet I never learn. I'm so stupid...*

“We’re here!” Tony announced with that classic Tony Stark confidence the whole world knows. But I know it’s just a cover up for his real emotions. I hoped we were past that. *Hoped.*

“Where is here?” Wanda asked, clearly trying to keep the conversations casual. I almost smiled for that.

“Only the best shawarma in the universe,” Tony marched straight up to the restaurant like he owns it, I wouldn’t be surprised if he does.

I didn’t miss how Happy rolled his eyes so hard they should have got stuck. Wanda just laughed lightly. I kept silent. *It's better that way.*

As soon as Tony walked in all the people in the restaurant all the people working their immediately shooed the other customers out. After pleading for pictures and autographs the customers finally left. I just moved off to the side, pretending I don’t exist because they don’t want me, they didn’t ask for me. But Wanda came over and stood next to me. She made sure I wasn’t alone. I would have smiled if my anxiety wasn’t spiking.

“Get us all my usual,” Tony told the cooks, or rather ordered with that Stark charm.

“Classy, Boss,” Happy muttered as we all sat down at a table by the counter.

I discreetly, at least I think so, tried to deepen my breaths to make my heart rate slow more. It’ll be a lot harder to pretend to be okay in a public, sort of, sitting surrounded by Tony, Happy, and Wanda.

Wanda was able to make comfortable small talk as we waited for the food, which came out impressively quickly. I did contribute a little but as to just not worry them more than I clearly already did.

You know that feeling? That one when you have so so many strong emotions and you feel them inside you. You see them. You know they are there. But you don't *feel* them. You know you

should be screaming and crying but you're just not. But it's not the same as being numb and it's not the same as dissociation, I know because I've felt those. Multiple times. But this, but this is like you see the emotions, you're reaching out and they graze your fingertips but they won't come into your grasp. And you just can't get them. But they are like acid inside you, tearing you apart and you just need to grab them and pull them out and let it all out. But you can't get them. And your chest is tight and you feel the panic setting in and you see it and you know it's there but you don't *feel* it. That. That's what kills me even more than just being numb or just feeling too much. Because it's not the bliss of numbness where I get to escape, but it's not the release of emotions that comes with feeling too much. It's in the middle. And it sucks. And there's no way out.

## Chapter End Notes

that feeling I described, it won't go away..

## to see reality

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

I am not okay. I am not fine. This won't go away. You may say it will but you don't have my life, you don't know how broken I am. I thought...no I hoped it would get better. But that's just another one of my problems. I hoped and I hoped and I hoped and I know better. I know I know better. But I'm just that stupid. I'm so so stupid. I'm an idiot and no one can tell me otherwise. I can't even do something as simple as *feel* right.

I can't even feel...how pathetic do I have to be to not even be able to either grasp my feelings and let them out, or to just push them down and feel nothing. I can't do either. I can't even do that. I can't do anything right...

"-eter? Peter?" Tony's voice sounded, but it didn't register in me.

It shouldn't be this hard. Nothing should be this hard. Life shouldn't be impossible, but it is. It is impossible. I can't even survive, let alone really live. That's why... *that's why I jumped.*

"Peter?" I think that was Wanda. But it still didn't really come through.

But if I tried again, I can't do it the same way. But I won't really ever get the chance to do it... That makes me weak, doesn't it?

Does that ever happen...when you are thinking and thinking and then all the stupid things you've ever done flood back in and you're drowning, *drowning, drowning. But at least it's better than that middle ground. At least I'm feeling. But maybe this was too much and I'm drowning, drowning, drowning and I'll never breathe again.*

"Peter!" Who's voice is that?

*Drowning. That's all that's left to do.*

*I didn't even try to swim. I didn't even try. I deserve to drown. I've messed up too much. I hurt too many people. I'm too broken. Too... too broken.*

*When glass shatters in the ocean, the pieces spread. They move around and never come back together. The water may smooth the edges of every broken piece, but doesn't that make them weaker? They go and they spread far away. And then they may end up on the beach. And maybe someone will pick up a piece. Maybe it'll end up in the trash, maybe they'll treasure it. But that's only because it's broken, and that piece looks pretty by itself, and it's smoothed down by all the waves crashing against it. I have to lose all my pieces...and then maybe someone will want me. An empty, shattered, thing. That's all I am.*

*That didn't even make any sense. And even that is enough to make me feel like crying.*

"Peter!" Another voice.

Voices, voices, voices. So many voices all *screaming* at me. Or maybe they're not screaming. Then why is it so loud? *Loud*.

*This isn't how this was supposed to go.*

"Peter! Peter, come back!" *Am I gone?*

*I guess I am. Haven't I always been gone?*

Wait. Tony wants me to be friends with Wanda. He insisted it. He wants something. It can't just be another friend because he said it was my choice who and when I talk to other people on the team. This wasn't my choice. He took away my choice. My control. *Just like May.*

No. It's not like that, right? I mean...

"Peter! Kid!" I ignored the noise. It's too loud. It's always too loud.

I mean, he's different. He's not May. But that doesn't mean he can't hurt me too.

Why Wanda? It can't just be an age thing? No? She, she has weird but cool powers. Her

powers...she can mess with the mind. She can make people see things. And she can see things. She can look into the mind. Does he want her to mess with my mind? I know I'm messed up but mind manipulation? *Manipulation.*

Is it like May?

I tried to speak but the words wouldn't come. This. This is how everything ends. It starts with a crack and ends with me shattering.

"You-you-" I gasped for breath, "you want-wanted this." *That came out wrong. I'm not blaming him, he'll think I'm blaming him and he'll be upset and if he's upset then I ruined everything. I always ruin everything. It's how it goes. I knew it would happen but I hoped it wouldn't be so soon. It's always hope. That's what kills me. Everything else breaks me, but hope is what kills me.*

"Wanted what?" His voice cracked. *I did that.*

"You want-wanted us-you wanted her to-" I can't do it. I shouldn't blame him. It's not his fault how I am. I can't blame him that I'm like this. It's no one's fault but mine. It's always mine. Mine. *Mine.*

*Always my fault.*

"Kid, breathe with me, in...out...in...out. Come on, Pete I know you can do it."

"Happy go start the car we're leaving."

"Will he be okay?"

"In...out...in...out. Pete, come on. In...out...in, kid feel my heartbeat. Yeah, listen to that. Feel it?"

Too many voices. Too loud. Too much. Too loud. Too much. Too much.

## Chapter End Notes

I really wasn't sure where to go with this chapter...but I did some thinking about myself. And then I started writing out my own thoughts and then i figured I'll just pretend it's Peter. Because pretending is so much easier.

## to calm down

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

I didn't wake up with a start. It was slow. I still crave that nothingness. I know I shouldn't, but I do. I always do.

"Pete, buddy, come back to me," I heard him whisper. *But he's the one that caused it.* I know, *I know*, I shouldn't blame him for my own mental issues but it's so much easier. And I need the easy route right now.

I managed to pry my eyes open only to see the hopeful eyes of Mr. Stark grow even more worried. *I did that.*

"Mr-Mr. Stark."

That made his smile turn even sadder, "yeah kid."

"Was Wanda here?" The smile slipped off his face.

Though his brows furrowed he did answer me, "she was here earlier. Do... do you want her here?"

"No!" I took a second to try to take deeper breaths, "no, I don't want her to be here right now..."

*Do I ask? Do I say that I know what he wants to do? But what if I'm wrong? What if that's not what his intentions are?*

*No. No. I know what he wants. He wants her inside my head. I know I'm messed up but it's my head. Do I not have the right to my own mind either?*

"What's on your mind, kid?" He put his hand on my knee. I flinched away. I haven't seen him this sad since I...

*I'm so stupid.*

“You want Wanda inside my head...” I meant to be calm, “you-you want her inside my mind,” my breathing increased rapidly, “you want her to mess with my mind! You’re using her against me!”

“Kid, calm down,” he tried.

“Don’t tell me to calm down! I can’t just *calm down*! Saying that doesn’t help, I know I have to calm down but it doesn’t just *work* like that!” I reached up and yanked at my hair in frustration.

He reached over to grab my hands and stop me from hurting myself.

“No...” I started crying. That’s all I ever do nowadays.

...

“I don’t think this was a good idea, Stark,” Wanda told him, crossing her arms. He didn’t miss her slight tremble. She’s still haunted by what she saw...

“I know,” he ran his fingers through his hair, not caring about messing up his classic hairstyle, “I know.”

## Chapter End Notes

I really did mean to post yesterday but something happened and I ended up having a severe mental breakdown for almost two hours. I was hiding in the bathroom sobbing. Eventually I stopped crying but I was so mentally drained I couldn’t do anything after that.

So more about chapter 23: My mind just got really really loud. And I couldn't get it to stop. So I wrote. And I wrote and that’s what came out. Even when my life is going right it always finds a way to go wrong. And I’m really scared because I posted that. And it’s wrong and I’m sorry.

Is it bad that I can't tell what's Peter and what's me talking?

And this chapter, I’m sorry it’s so short but I just can’t mentally handle doing a longer and more in depth chapter right now. But I do plan on doing more with Wanda soon.



# the pain to be gone

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

### Wanda's POV

I've gone into many minds, even Ultron's, but nothing prepared me for what was happening in Peter's.

At first it was just darkness. Then I heard screaming. Then crying. Not soft tears but full on ugly sobs, gasping for breath. Gasping. Gasping. There's not enough air, even I can hardly breathe. It's like even if he wasn't sobbing he still wouldn't be able to breathe.

*A whisper.*

Once my eyes adjusted to the darkness I could finally see the floor. Stained red. I reached down to touch it and my hand came up dripping in the blood. Blood on the hands.

I went searching, searching for him. All around me echoed different voices. One, I recognized as Stark. There was a woman's voice, and another man. I didn't recognize them.

More screaming.

*A whisper.*

Gun shots. Ricocheting again and again.

I kept walking. I kept going and going until I saw *something* in the distance. The voices were louder there. I finally reached the destination.

Tombs. Hundreds of them. Each of them dripping with blood. Each of them had a voice screaming from it.

I thought I heard the horn of a ferry.

*A whisper.*

“You did this!”

“You didn’t save me!”

“You killed me!”

“It’s your fault!”

It’s so loud, *so loud*, I had to cover my ears. The blood on my hands got in my hair and on my head but I didn’t care.

I kept walking until I reached the middle of the graveyard.

**Ben Parker**

**May Parker**

**Tony Stark**

*A whisper.*

There sat their tombstones. Dripping with blood. Screaming. Screaming so much louder than the others.

It’s like they sucked all the oxygen out. Suddenly it is impossible to breathe. Gasping. Sobbing. Gasping. But there’s no air. No way to breathe. No way to *live*.

I heard something else. Something different. It started off low and gradually grew in volume. A low hiss. It seemed to coil around everything. Wrapping and squeezing. Going tighter and tighter, it ached.

The snake seemed endless. And impossibly strong. It completely wrapped around everything. Squeezing any hope of life away.

I could finally hear what that whisper was saying. But I wish I hadn't. Every fear, every insecurity, *everything* it broke down. It destroyed. Like a fire unable to be quenched. Burning and burning but giving off no light, no warmth. Just chaos and destruction and no way to stop it. Every dark thought, every awful idea, it whispers, it's voice like honey.

The snake never did stop.

The whispers only grew louder.

The screams never ceased.

And I still thought I could hear the ferry's horn.

*A whisper.*

I looked up. And I saw balloons. White balloons. Growing in size. Filling up with nothing but air. They kept growing, forcing the snake to loosen its hold.

But the balloons gave off no light, they didn't help the darkness. They just filled up room with empty space. *Empty.*

*A whisper.*

Then the red started to rise. Filling up every gap, every space left. Stealing any air left. The blood never stopped. It's too thick to swim in. It just weighs you down. Endless weight. Pulling and

grabbing. Suffocating you. But it's not like there was much air to begin with.

*A whisper.*

I couldn't handle it anymore and I left his mind as quick as I could. Then I started gasping. Sobbing. Gasping. But I couldn't get any air. I couldn't breathe. No way to *live*.

...

Tony could tell that whatever was in Peter's mind was so much worse than what they were expecting. He could tell whenever Wanda thought of it because she would shudder.

He had never seen her cry before. But the second she came out of his mind she broke down. Full on sobbing, uncontrollably. He held her as she cried. It was a sad miracle that Peter had stayed unconscious during that whole ordeal. Tony figured it would be best to just get it over with since he was already knocked out from the panic attack at the restaurant.

When he tried to get her to talk about it... *god* he'd never seen her more terrified. He wasn't sure if she'd ever tell him. He never thought it could be that bad.

"Is there any way to help him?" He asked.

"I don't know Tony...I don't know..." she shuddered.

...

*I ruined it. I ruin everything. That's why Tony hates me. That's why everyone hates me. I yelled at him. I said I didn't want Wanda.*

I am just Peter Parker. And I will never be anything more.

*He was the only one I thought...I hoped, god I let myself hope, I hoped he would stay. I knew he would leave eventually. Everyone does. But I hoped it would last longer.*

I am just Peter Parker. And no one wants me.

*He was the one person that I thought maybe just maybe he would last. Even just a little longer than the others. That maybe I wouldn't be alone again so soon. That maybe everything would be okay. But I was wrong. I'm always wrong.*

I am just Peter Parker. And the pain will be gone soon.

## Chapter End Notes

This was a tough chapter to write. This chapter was just...a lot.

## a note

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“I feel awful about this, Stark. I never should have gone into his head without permission,” she stopped him in the hall, her arms crossed.

“We needed to see what caused the panic attack,” he defended, hands balled up in fists at his side.

“You mean *you* needed to see what was happening. But you didn’t see it, *I* did and it...it is so much worse than either of us expected,” her eyes grew distant as she was reminded of all that pain, all the darkness, all the blood.

“You said you would do it,” he reminded her.

You could see the fire light behind her eyes, behind all the sadness, “I said I would do it if we talked to him first! But you made me feel like we had no choice! Like if I didn’t find out the cause of his panic attack it would be my fault for whatever happens next!”

He actually took a step back, “I...I didn’t mean to put that pressure on you.”

“He deserves consent, Stark. When he finds out, yes *when* because he is a smart boy and will figure it out if he hasn’t already, he will feel betrayed. Because he was just starting to trust us and now he doesn’t get a say in this. It’s about control, Stark. If he loses all his control, he will find a way to find his own.”

It took him a second to realize what she was insinuating, “you think he’ll...go back to old habits, to get that control.” It wasn’t a question because they both knew the answer.

...

I made Mr. Stark leave. Tony. He’s...he’s all I had. In reality, he is all I had because Wanda was going to leave, and Happy never liked me. Wanda saw me have a panic attack. She saw how helpless I really am. She’s too strong to want to be friends with someone like me. And Happy...I’m surprised he didn’t leave earlier. I bet it was just because he works for Tony and he had to.

Me and Tony never did talk about when I called him Dad. That was such a big thing but it was brushed off like it was nothing. As if I actually had a dad that was alive and there for me. As if I haven't been searching for a father figure ever since I caused Uncle Ben to die.

But that doesn't matter.

I wrote a note this time. It was hard, yet easy at the same time.

*I never thought I would want Tony to leave...*

I should be sorry. I should feel bad for leaving. But no one ever felt bad about leaving me. Because I'm toxic, I'm not good for them, I'm me. I spent too much time just trying to figure out how to address the note. It's not like I haven't thought about it before, how many notes I would write, who they would be for, how long they would be, etc. But a lot has changed.

Now, the only person I can think to address is Tony. He almost...I actually let myself believe that he could be like a dad to me.

But this is real. This is my reality.

But what if I fail? Again? I mean, I fail everything else. I failed last time. Then I would be stuck in the same place again. Repeating the same things again and again. You can't run away by running in circles.

But what else is there to do? My note...well I guess it's not quite finished. I just have to sign my name. *Sign my life away...*

Tony and Wanda betrayed me. They went in my head without my consent...but if I'm always wrong...

Maybe I jumped to conclusions too fast. Maybe I was wrong...and then I made Tony leave out of my own foolishness.

I reread my note.

**Dear Mr. Stark,**

**I wanted you to be more than just Tony. I called you Dad once...and I meant it. But I can't live when everyone hurts me. I'm not living. I am barely surviving. This is what's best. I should say that I'm sorry but I'm not. I know I should be, but I just can't. I'm sorry for that. I know you'll move on, you're stronger than I ever could be. That's why I looked up to you.**

**Goodbye,**

“Friday?”

“Yes, Master Parker?”

“Call Tony.”

Chapter End Notes

Well life isn't going so well but I figured I would still post.



## the snake to loosen

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

*What am I supposed to say to him? Like, oh hey Tony by the way I was gonna kill myself but I'm too scared and weak and I couldn't even finish the suicide note and now I don't know what to do next. No. No that's stupid and it'll freak him out and I didn't hide the note!*

I quickly lunged over and snatched up my note, but I didn't have the heart to crumple it up. I swiftly shoved the the paper into a drawer in my nightstand. I had just sat back down when Tony came rushing into my room.

"Tony, I-I-" I couldn't finish my sentence. He pulled me into a hug before I started crying. Crying again because that's all I ever do.

But he didn't let go. He didn't leave. He didn't even seem annoyed, somehow.

"I'm here, Pete," he mumbled into my hair as he hugged me, tight and... and *safe* .

"Da-Dad?" I hid my face in his shoulder.

"Yeah, Pete?" He let out a breath, holding me tighter.

"I-I was gonna-I was gonna leave," it came out in more of a broken whisper than a real sentence. But based on his sharp intake of breath he probably understood what I meant.

He tried to speak several times, but couldn't find the words. But he didn't me go. He didn't. He never did. *Can I hope that he never will?*

"I'm here, kid, I'm here," was what he finally said. And it was good.

...

It's like the snake loosened its hold on me. Not let go, no I'm not sure of the snake will ever be gone. It would be news to me if the snake could ever leave. But it's not wrapped so tightly anymore. I can finally breathe.

## Chapter End Notes

I feel that you guys deserve an explanation on why my recent chapters have been so much darker. Reading them over again, it's scary but that's because I'm scared. Yesterday I cut ties with someone who has been emotionally manipulating me. These last few weeks have been the worst my mental health has been in over a year. I have never had this many panic attacks and mental breakdowns so close together. It isn't all because of him, but everything with him didn't help. I know I was selfish for leaving him. But I know it was my fault. I knew what he was doing. And I just let it happen because I was too scared to tell him the truth. But maybe the most terrifying part is how low I let myself get, how much I let myself take. It was one of my friends that finally got me to stop talking to him and block him. I have to put myself first. I'm still scared. I'm upset. I'm not okay. And there's a lot more to the story. But I think this is a step towards getting better. Towards getting healthier. So yeah...that's what's been going on.

# therapy

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

I guess I fell asleep.

And all was relatively normal until Tony decided to break the silence we had fallen into, “so, Pete, I absolutely love when you talk to me,” *Where is he going with this?* “but you also need to get some professional help. And before you argue that it won’t work, I already know we need someone...special because of your particular circumstances being Spider-Man and all.”

*What does that mean? What kind of ‘special’ person can deal with me?*

But he continued, “and this has to be someone that I also trust, because I would never want you to try to open up to someone that I don’t trust. And so I wanted to see how you feel about talking to Sam.”

*Wait what? Sam as in Sam Wilson? The Falcon?*

“You want me to talk to the Falcon?” My voice too filled with shock to be upset.

“Yes. He has a lot of experience and he can help with PTSD...and he’s really good. I’m not saying you do or do not have PTSD, but he knows how to help with that to. I trust him.”

I came up with the only argument I could think of, “he doesn’t like me...” It’s not a lie. He doesn’t like me. Even though I haven’t actually talked to him, at the airport we fought and he was upset with me and then he hit me with a drone. He probably hates me, I don’t blame him.

“What do you mean?” His eyebrows furrowed. Well I guess that makes sense that he doesn’t understand, because it’s not like I ever told him what happened at the airport. I didn’t think it was a big deal. I mean he doesn’t even know about everything that happened at homecoming.

“At the airport-” he cut me off.

“At the airport? Kid-” that time he cut himself off with a huff of breath, “the airport was a mistake. That is not an accurate representation of how we all feel about each other.”

“Well-he just he didn’t like me and I’m scared and I don’t want to, I can’t just-” I can’t even form a full sentence.

He put his hands on my shoulders, “Pete, Peter hey it’s okay. It can just be like with Steve, you just meet and it doesn’t have to be anything deep. Just starting to get to know each other.”

“But I’m scared...” it came out in a whimper. *God I’m a child.*

“It’s okay to be scared. I can go with you, or even Wanda, Steve, or Happy.” At my frown he continued, “Hey, what’s on your mind, kid?”

“But Happy doesn’t like me, he never did,” my frown deepened at the thought.

“Why the *hell* would you think that Happy doesn’t like you?” I would like to think Tony didn’t mean for his voice to come out so harsh.

“I-I’m sorry, I’m sorry I just, I just thought that, I just thought-” again he cut off my ramble.

“Peter, look at me. Happy does not hate you, he doesn’t even dislike you. He just...has a hard time showing his real emotions. He is here for you. I promise he is.”

“You promise?” I still sound so *so* young.

“I promise. Now what do you think about meeting Sam?” He asked, gently.

I nodded.

Oof y'all I am home sick for the second day in a row. Though it really sucks to be this sick, I'm honestly relieved to be out of school for a couple days. Thank you all so much for the support, I am feeling a little better. And I am relieved that he has not tried to use mutual friends to get to me so that's good. I'm still working through what happened, but I'm doing a little bit better. And I'm sorry all my chapters are so tiny, I really a, trying to make them longer but it's really hard.

## to talk

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“Sam, I’m gonna talk to you now,” Tony announced, interrupting Steve and Sam’s conversation.

“Okay?” He walked over, “What’s up?”

“So you’re like a therapist?” he continued on, not waiting for Sam to answer, “Well Peter needs to talk to someone and you’re the only professional I trust for him to confide in.”

His eyebrows raised, “wow, Tony that’s actually really kind of you that you think so highly of me.”

“Yeah whatever,” though he brushed it off, they both knew the weight of his words, “but he’s nervous, respectively, and so I want you two to just meet and get more comfortable with each other.”

“Yeah, yeah that sounds great. I’d love to,” his smile was so big, Tony wasn’t expecting it.

“There’s just one problem,” that sobered him up.

“Besides him being scared?” Sam asked, fearing the worst.

“He is convinced that you hate him.” He said it plain and simple, though it did not lessen the blow.

“What? What would he think that? We haven’t even talked,” he could not comprehend.

Tony sighed before explaining further, “I know. I don’t know what happened between you two at the airport but Peter said it was bad and you hate him because of it”

“I mean yeah he annoyed me,” seeing the protective Stark’s glare, he quickly finished his sentence, “but I don’t even dislike him, let alone hate him.”

“Okay, well he won’t listen to me, and I don’t even know what happened. But he will not believe me when I say that what happened at the airport... it...” Tony huffed out another breath.

“Yeah I get what you’re saying. I’ll talk to him. Thank you for coming to me.”

...

I don’t know. I don’t even know how I feel. I don’t know anything.

“So Pete, what do you think about talking to Sam tomorrow?” Tony suddenly asked. We had been in a comfortable silence watching a movie. He gives me options and lets me pick from them, he always does funny, happy, movies to try to get me to laugh. It works sometimes.

“What would that mean?” I asked, voice so small.

“Just meeting and getting to know each other. No pressure, no expectations.” *But that is pressure. I have to make a good impression. But I already ruined that. I already sort of met him and he hates me because I fought him and annoyed him and I already ruined it because I ruin everything every time.*

“Okay...” I mumbled.

## Chapter End Notes

I finally realized the one good thing about that person, the one who manipulated me, besides all that learning from mistakes and knowing better next time. I realized he was the only person that would try to make sure I ate three meals a day. I can’t remember the last time I had three meals in one day, despite his efforts. Everyone else either doesn’t realize or care that I still have issues with eating. Most of my friends gave up on me. But then again it’s been over two years, I don’t blame them. But he would still try to get me to eat, though I haven’t even known him for long. Though he only found out like a week before I blocked him, but he still tried. He did care somewhat. Yeah, he hurt me a lot and manipulated me in horrible ways, but he did care.. I think. I don’t know. It confuses me.

So I found out I have yet another trigger, and I didn't even know. It's a nickname that only one other person had ever called me and it wasn't in a good way and it was just horrible. And yesterday one of my friends called me that same nickname and I just spiraled. I didn't know it was a trigger because no one else had ever said it and it did not go well. It's not their fault, I know that. I just was not prepared. So that was crazy.

"Does anybody have a map?

Anybody maybe happen to know how the hell to do this?

I don't know if you can tell

But this is me just pretending to know

So where's the map?

I need a clue

'Cause the scary truth is

I'm flying blind

And I'm making this up as I go"

Yes, thank you Dear Evan Hansen for once again putting my feelings into words when I can't.



## to stop running in circles

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

I know this will sound stupid, but my biggest reason for not cutting isn't what you think it would be. It's not because I'm better, it's not for the people that seem to care about me, it's not because it's a big secret. No. I'm not better, I can hide it from everyone, it's not hard. No, it's the hindrance of it. When I cut, it's different than being numb and it's completely different than dissociation. Though cutting can lead to numbness, it's a different kind. It's like a distraction from the emotional pain. Okay well that depends on why you're cutting.

You can cut to punish yourself, and therefore the nuisance the after effects are actually aren't as bad because it's a reminder of why you had to punish yourself. But if you do it to escape the pain for even a moment, then the stinging of the fresh cuts is just annoying. Every time you shower, it burns. But when sweat gets on the cuts, that's the worst. That's even worse than actually touching the cuts or when clothes rub against them. And it's awful when you want to sleep but the burning keeps you awake. That's why I haven't tarnished this little clean streak. It's so stupid.

"You ready, kid?" Tony asked as he led me to a common area, the same one I met Wanda at. I haven't seen Wanda since the restaurant. She's probably disgusted with how weak I am. I don't blame her.

"I guess," I mumbled as I followed his lead. I already know it won't go well.

Sam stood up to greet us as soon as we walked in. Tony gave him a nod then waited for me to greet him. Not knowing what to do I just gave a little wave with a pathetic 'hi'.

"Hi, it's great to finally meet you, Peter," he smiled. It looked real but he probably just learned how to fake smiles too. It's not hard.

"Well have fun, kid," and after placing a comforting hand on my shoulder Tony left the room. He left me alone with Sam. *Left.*

Realizing I never responded to him I quickly stated, "oh um, it's nice to meet you too."

He chuckled softly, but you could hear something else behind it, "you don't have to be nervous with me. There's no pressure. This is just so we can start getting to know each other."

“That’s what Tony said...” I didn’t mean to say that out loud.

“Yeah, you and him seem really close.” I know what he’s doing, he’s trying to get me to keep talking. But what other choice do I have?

“He’s everything...” Wow that was stupid.

*But it’s true. He is everything I ever wanted. Someone that wants me. Someone that understands that I don’t wanna be like this, this messed up, this broken. That it’s not my choice to have anxiety and depression. Someone that stays. That even if he may leave me sometimes he’ll always come back. He won’t leave me. Someone that I can actually have hope for. Hope that I can believe in them. Believe that they really do care, believe that they really will stay. He’s everything I ever needed. Everything I ever wanted.*

*And I know that’s dangerous. Putting so much on one person. So much hope, so much weight, so much burden. But I don’t have anyone else. Wanda left, Happy doesn’t understand, and May...I can’t go back to May.*

“Is that a good thing?” Sam asked.

*Is it? Yes and no.*

And that’s what I said, “both. Both good and bad. I need him. But I shouldn’t need him.”

“Why shouldn’t you need him?” He asked, gently.

“Because when he leaves I’ll be left in a worse place than when I started because I’ll know what I lost, what I’ll be missing again.” *That, that was a lot. I’m saying too much. I always say too much.*

I just want this to go well. I just want it to be good but it can’t because it just never can go well because that’s my life. Or maybe it’s my death. I don’t know anymore. I know I’m the one putting this pressure on myself but this is supposed to be good. This is supposed to help me. But it’s just freaking me out more. But I can’t back out. No. I can’t do that. Tony wants me to talk to Sam and so I will. I can’t keep disappointing him.

Before Sam could come up with a response to my overflow of depressing information I asked a stupid question, “so what do you like to do?”

How the frick can I be such a stupid person? Can someone please tell me?

That took him by surprise, “Well when I can I like to fly in my falcon suit for fun. I also enjoy jogging when Steve isn’t running laps around me,” he ended in a chuckle. That one sounded real. Maybe he is real.

“I miss swinging around when I was Spider-Man.” *Was.*

*I was Spider-Man but I ruined that too because I ruin everything because that’s my reality. My reality is that everything has to fall apart because I’m falling apart and no matter how much I try to put myself together it will never be enough to fix me when I can’t stop everything from being destroyed. I don’t even make sense anymore. I never make sense. I’m just running in circles.*

If this sounds repetitive it’s because it is. It is it is it is because I’m repetitive because when my anxiety is high I repeat myself over and over and over. And at least I understand that. I’m just going in circles circles *circles* and there’s no way out. There’s never any way out because that’s my mind. That’s just how my mind works. That’s my reality and my reality doesn’t make any sense but it’s reality so it should make sense but it doesn’t because that’s how messed up I am. I don’t even make sense. But did I ever?

Will it ever end?

*I mean it could.*

“I’m sure you’ll be able to go out as Spider-Man again soon. Have you asked Tony about it?” I forgot I had been talking to Sam.

“No, no I haven’t asked. It never really came up.”

“Well if you want that can be something to ask him about. He cares and he’ll listen to your side.”

*Unlike May.*

*No. No I can't talk bad about her. Or think bad. Whatever, she cares and she doesn't deserve that. She cares. She does.*

*But I keep pushing everyone away, yet I get so upset when they don't stay.*

*But I guess I just want someone to show me that even when my mind is Hell and I push everyone away they'll still come back because that's how much they care. But that's too much to ask.*

*But Tony keeps coming back...*

*He always came back, didn't he?*

## Chapter End Notes

Well a lot of crap went down with my dad yesterday and that really sucked, but it worked out I guess. I mean he apologized so that was good. But it was just ridiculous what happened. I'm still sick and I threw up three times yesterday but my dad still accused me of faking sick to try to get out of going to school.

My mind is still loud, so so loud and it's too much but I'm trying to make it through. There is probably not another song in existence that I relate to more than Words Fail from Dear Evan Hansen. It's actually kind of ridiculous how much I relate to every word, which is ironic since it's called Words Fail.

# **i don't know**

## Chapter Notes

TW

This is a really hard chapter, self harm, panic attack

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

I hate this, I hate being like this. I've really been trying, trying to be happier, to be better, to be a better person. I know it takes time but I can't keep doing this. I'm selfish and stupid and I'm asking for too much and I know that. But I can't keep living like this. My mind is relentless and I'm not strong enough. This has literally been years. And I'm still like this. And my mind still won't shut up. I'm not getting stronger, I'm just getting weaker. I'm running in circles and what's the point?

I know this sounds worse than it is. It's Hell but I'm not planning on doing 'anything I'd regret'. If I was, I wouldn't be here right now, that would be inhumane to put that weight on...on anyone. But I guess this already is too much. Because I'm this horrible.

But this is something I have to deal with on my own, right? Because I have to be able to save myself otherwise I'm not worth saving. I mean why not? Yeah there's hindrance but I have a blade still. I have multiple.

I'm sorry but my mind won't be quiet.

It's getting louder and louder and I can't stop it.

It hasn't been this loud since I had that really really bad panic attack... when was that? I can't remember. It all blurs together.

The only reason I haven't cut shouldn't be because of the hindrance of it. It's shouldn't be like this. It's stupid.

But scratching doesn't have that effects. It's a lot harder to heal but it doesn't burn like fire in my skin. That...that could work. I mean I may regret that but that's not suicide, that's not so definite. It, it could work.

I wish my nails were longer.

I should text someone. I should call someone. I don't even have to tell them what's happening but just to talk. Just to distract myself.

But that's too much. They need to worry about their own mental health, not mine. It's cruel to ask so much of them.

I should just go to the bathroom and cry. I shouldn't bring my blade with me.

But I'm already in the bathroom. And my blade is in my hand. And I feel my heart beating against me.

Just holding it is comforting. Just knowing that I *can* is almost enough to make me not want to. It's so little but it's *so big* at the same time.

No one knows I have it. No one. Because they can't take it away from me. Not again. It's mine. I control it.

Or maybe it controls me.

But it's better than anyone else controlling me. It's so easy, *so easy* to give in. I would love to think I'm too strong, but that's not true. I know better. I know that I didn't bring bandaids with and I can't get blood everywhere because that's a big mess and just too much of a hassle. And just tracing the blade over my skin, not enough to break through but enough to know *I can* is almost enough. Almost.

I didn't tell anyone that I started digging my nails into my skin again. Nice little half crescents etched into my flesh. It's barely self-harm.

I can see the blue of my veins. I see it. There's blood in it. I know I sound so stupid.

I remember reading quotes about stardust in our blood. That we were made by the destruction of stars. But doesn't that mean we were meant to be destroyed too?

Maybe not. I remember once, I didn't cut because of that very quote. Because I have to keep my star dust.

But I want the star dust out, I want to see the scarlet red. I want to watch it drip.

I'm horrible. No one should still be listening, but who is listening? The voices in my head? Anxiety and depression telling me to just do it.

But the nice thing about anxiety is sometimes it thinks ahead. It'll be distracting to have these cuts. I know it will be. I've done this a hundred times.

But the scratching, that's so *easy*. Easy, easy, easy, I always wanted the easy way out.

I just raked my nails across my arm. It felt good. I need help. I should call someone right now. I should go find someone to talk to. But who's left? Who would stay through this.

Sometimes a panic attack isn't crying and rocking back and forth on the floor. Sometimes it's *this* and this is so much worse.

I need help. But I have to help myself because that's the only right thing to do. I've made every wrong decision and I can't keep hurting people. I've hurt enough people.

I would always use my thumb nail, it's the strongest. But it's so short right now and it's really annoying.

I'm so fragile it's insane.

I see the lines, red and white from when I scratched myself a few moments ago. It was deeper than I expected. But I'm not upset. I don't regret it.

I *hate* that the scars on my thigh are fading. I want them back. They're comforting. They aren't bad. Everyone else thinks they're bad but *I'm not them*.

I'm insane. I'm losing my mind. I can't keep doing this.

I wonder if there's still those expired pills under the sink.

I checked my phone. I did get a new phone after all. Part of me regrets it but part of me is glad to have access to people.

I have new messages. I can feel the tears pushing at the back of my eyes, but they won't fall. I want them too. People actually texted me. But I can't tell them.

I already put them through too much I can't do this too. That's too much.

I have to remember my blade.

I checked. I texted them back, ten minutes late and they didn't read my text. I mean they have no idea what is happening right now. It's not their fault. No. It's never their fault and if I ever cause them to think is their fault then...I'm scared to say.

I'm scared. I'm scared. I'm always scared.

Holy frick it's circles. Everything is always in circles and I feel the snake wrapping tighter and tighter and I can't breathe and I want to cry.

*Please let me cry.*

I have a song stuck in my head, it's from a musical. I don't want it to leave me. Not it too.

I put my blade in my pocket so I don't forget it.



No new messages.

No reasons not to.

But it's not their fault. I know it isn't. It's mine for pinning all my hope on people who don't even know what's happening. Because I make all the wrong decisions.

My mind won't be quiet.

But I still feel the stinging from when I scratched myself. And that was nothing.

I started. Scraping my nail back and forth over the same spot. Ripping away skin and going deeper and deeper.

But I paused for a moment because doing it on my wrist is so obvious. It takes at least a week to heal fully. I've tried other places on my body before but nothing is as satisfying as the wrist.

And now that I feel the sting I need more. I need to keep going. But will I regret it?

Probably not.

I haven't done it yet. It's been a few minutes. But if I leave this bathroom life will go on. And I don't mean that in the hopeful way. I mean no one knows what happened, everyone thinks I'm okay. But I'm not. I'm not okay and I know I need help and I want to talk to someone. I *need* to talk to someone but I can't.

I want to cut. I need to cut. But I haven't. Only out of necessity because I can't deal with the physical after effects of it. Because I'm that weak. This, this right here isn't strength. I don't know what it is.

I wish I cut. I want to. So bad. I miss it. I know I saw a quote once that said something like, 'even when you stop you'll only miss it' and I understand that on every level. I wish I knew the real quote.

I am messed up. And you can't say that I'm not because of everything that just happened.

But no ones here. No one's listening.

I wish I could be hopeful. I wish I could say that everything is looking up, that I'm glad that I didn't cut or keep scratching. But I can't.

Don't be like me. This is Hell. And I made it. I made my own Hell and I am suffering for it. I decided to start cutting however long ago that was. This is my fault. And May was right, it's my fault. I can't argue that. And I am stuck with the after effects. It's always the after effects that hurt the most.

I know about grounding and I know breathing exercises and I know it all. But I'm still not okay. Will I ever be okay?

I am still not okay. Nothing is working and I am falling apart so so quickly. I am alone and no one's coming to save me. But I can't save myself. Not me. I'm not strong enough. I should be but I'm not. It's so easy to let go *but why haven't I?*

I'm scared. It may not seem like it but I do have hope for the future and I have dreams. But I'm not there yet. And I don't know how to get there. Will I ever?

The ironic thing is after all that I'm still not okay.

Not yet. Yet. Am I just saying that at this point or do I still have hope? I don't know. I don't know anything.

I'm supposed to be getting better. But I'm just getting worse. For a little while I actually thought I was getting better, but no. I was just getting numb more often and I was mistaking not feeling the pain with no pain. But I'm still stuck like this, so so messed up. That doesn't even do it justice. But what does it matter?

I want to give a hopeful message. To whoever is listening, if there is a God or something out there. If someone is really there...as if someone really cares. But if someone was listening why would

they still be here after all that?

The most I can give is I'm still here. I don't know how. I'm still trying even if no one notices or cares. That's all I got. That's all I got...

## Chapter End Notes

I don't know. That chapter could have been a long author's note for all I care. It's all the same. It's always the same. Just running in circles over and over.

## to share the weight

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

I'm so scared because I have so much weight pulling me down but no one else deserves to be weighed down by my burdens. I can't handle it but they don't deserve it.

It feels like I'm still trapped in the building. More and more presses against me, trapping me against the floor. I can't escape. Screaming and crying but no one's there. But more and more weight is added and I can't lift it. I can't. Not even with the strength I do have I can't lift it on my own.

But I would rather take all the weight than put it on someone else. Even putting some of it on them is too much. They have their own burdens pushing them down, they don't deserve mine too. No one does.

...

"So how did it go with Sam?" Tony asked as I helped him make lunch. He's been making an effort to spend more casual time with me. To just hang out.

Apparently Tony actually makes good sandwiches. I mean it'll never be Delmar's but he's trying.

"It was good," I answered non descriptively. He waited a whole day to ask me about it. I honestly would have been more up to talking to him about it if I didn't have that panic attack last night. It really did go okay with Sam, not as informal as I would have wanted, but he doesn't seem to hate me somehow.

"Care to elaborate?" He laughed as he was finishing up dressing the sandwiches. It sounded so easy and natural, no strain or sadness. That's how I like it.

"We just talked. It was kinda nice. Um..but he did mention that I should ask you about something," I ended in a murmur and he handed me my food.

"And what is that?" He asked, trying to be causal.

“When can I be Spider-Man again?” I just asked. So plain and simple it’s like the anxiety isn’t trying to choke me out.

*Always choking, squeezing all the air out, killing me so painfully.*

That took him aback, and it took him a second to recollect before he responded, “oh, um kid I didn’t realize you were thinking about that.”

“I wasn’t really,” I tried to fix the mess I was starting, “I was just wondering, but I don’t have to. It’ll be fine. I’ll be fine.”

“No, kid we can figure this out together. If you want to go out as Spider-Man again then we’ll figure it out,” he told me, obviously just trying to make me happy. But it’s nice to have someone that wants me happy.

“I don’t know...can we just relax for right now?” I really don’t know. I don’t know how that would work and it’s not like I can help anyone anymore anyway. But I do miss it. I miss swinging around, I miss being helpful, I miss the people wanting me.

“Yeah, of course,” he finally picked up his plate and led me to the couch. I followed, sitting right next to him and he went through the movie options. All comedies.

It’s hard to eat. Like, when my anxiety is so high I just can’t do it. But then I don’t eat anything for possibly days at a time and I can’t do that. But when I do eat I feel like I’m going to throw up, and sometimes I do. Most days I only eat dinner because I mentally can’t handle breakfast and lunch doesn’t typically work out. But with my metabolism then it always feels like my stomach is trying to eat itself, but then I try to eat and it still hurts. I can’t win.

But Tony keeps worrying. He keeps trying to get me to eat more often and in bigger amounts when I do eat. I appreciate him trying but I just don’t work like that. I can’t *just eat* three meals a day anymore. Even just eating two makes me feel nauseous. And I know that’s probably not good but I don’t have a choice.

I was able to take a few bites before I started to feel sick. So that’s good, there are some days that a single bite will make me feel horrible. I tried to casually watch the movie, but I knew Tony was watching to see if I’d eat more.

I dared to take another bite. But it was too much. I literally can't eat anymore without losing it all. I feel bad though, I don't mean to waste food. I don't want to. I wouldn't even be eating now if he hadn't already been making it for me.

But he didn't say anything and we just watched the movie. It was nice to just be able to relax. My mind was a bit quieter, and though that may not seem like much it really is. Any moment where my mind is not *screaming* at me is a pretty good one.

## Chapter End Notes

Well I've told a few people what really happened with that guy who manipulated me, and they actually believe me. I don't even have proof because I deleted his texts in an attempt to forget, but they still believe me.

Right now the songs that are speaking to me most through all this crap are Praying by Kesha, White Flag by Bishop Briggs, and Jar of Hearts by Christina Perri. All of them remind me of him, but they also remind me that I can get stronger from this somehow. That though it's really hard, and takes a lot of time, I can heal. I'm not healed yet but I'm working on it.

## for someone to stay

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Wanda still hasn't talked to me. She must hate me. I'm not surprised, everyone does eventually. Even the people who say they'll stay never do. They never will. I guess...I still like to hope they will, even for a little while.

I believed Tony. He's leaving. He says it'll only be for a night, that he'll be back by the time I wake up tomorrow.

But I'm scared. I didn't tell him that I've been having nightmares. They keep getting worse. It's terrifying.

But knowing Tony is there if I need him, it helps. But he won't be here. He's leaving. He's a billionaire he could be all the way across the world and never come back and I would never be able to find him.

But wouldn't it be easier for him to just kick me out? I don't know, I don't know what he has in mind. And that's scary too.

I had a nightmare last night that Tony hurt me. Physically hurt me. And I didn't even try to stop him. Because I knew that if Tony...if Tony thought I deserve to be hit then I must deserve it. So I took it. All of it. But he wouldn't stop. He wouldn't stop.

I woke up crying. Terrified. I haven't felt that scared since May found out about the self-harm. But I just stayed curled up in bed crying. But I had to keep my eyes open because every time, *every time* I closed my eyes I would just see him hurting me. Again and again. An inescapable nightmare.

But he really is leaving this time. I want to hope he'll come back, but that would be stupid, wouldn't it?

...

“What do you mean you’ll be gone?” Tony demanded.

“Woah, I’m sorry I never would have made plans if I knew you needed someone to stay with Peter,” Sam explained.

Tony huffed out a breath, “and Steve is going too?”

“Yeah...what about Happy?” Sam suggested.

“He’s with Pepper in China right now. Wanda’s here...but that won’t work out,” he thought aloud. “What is it? I know you’re thinking something.”

“Bucky will be here.”

The anger and protectiveness that flared in Tony’s eyes was frightening to say the least.

“Hey, I know things are...tense between you two but...I do trust him. Don’t tell him I said that though,” Sam dared to end with a small smile.

“If anything, *anything*, goes wrong...” Tony didn’t need to end the sentence for Sam to know what he means.

...

I sat with him as he packed. I couldn't find it in me to help him. I’m just that selfish.

As he zipped up his suitcase, he broke the silence, “so Pete, I don’t want to leave you alone while I’m gone. So how would you feel about meeting Bucky?” There was something behind his eyes, a kind of strain I haven’t seen before.

“But I thought...” I didn’t dare finish my sentence, knowing it’ll only upset him. “Okay.”



“I’ll be back soon,” he put a reassuring hand on my shoulder. It was nice. But then he quickly broke off in a swear and snatched up his bag, saying he was running late.

...

Tony left a few minutes ago. And I already feel that snake tightening its hold on my chest, squeezing and squeezing all the air out of my lungs.

He told me he’ll be back. But I didn’t want him to go in the first place. He didn’t even wait long enough for me to actually meet Bucky.

I’m not planning on leaving my room. I just stayed sitting on my bed, waiting for time to pass but it goes so slow when I’m alone. I can’t leave my room, I’ll just fall apart. The snake won’t let me breathe, but I’m not hyperventilating yet.

It’s almost dinner time. I don’t need to eat though. I won’t starve, one meal won’t kill me so what’s the harm?

“Master Parker, Sergeant Barnes requests your presence for dinner,” Friday announced, only for the snake to coil tighter around me. Tighter and tighter.

“No-no I can’t Friday,” I barely managed to get out while my breathing increased.

“Sergeant Barnes asks if are in need of assistance,” she won’t just shut up!

I couldn't even respond as I rocked back and forth on my bed, it won’t stop. It never stops.

*Why can't I just get better? I never get better. If anything I'm just getting worse and worse and worse and I'm just running in circles and more circles and there's no way out there's no way-*

*Knocking.*

*No. No! Go away! Go away!*

*Knocking.*

“Peter? Are you okay?” *No. Never okay, never okay. I never will be okay.*

I clutched the sides of my head, but nothing ever works. My mind won't just *shut up* already and the thoughts won't stop. The snake is stealing all the air left in me.

“I'm coming in, Peter,” it has to be Sergeant Barnes. Everyone else left.

He opened the door and immediately upon seeing my state he seemed to go into a different state. Somehow a sort of calm seemed to overcome him, and he slowly approached me.

“Hi, Peter. My name is Bucky. Tony asked for me to stay with you. I'm here to help,” the way he spoke...I didn't mind that noise.

My breathing was too uneven for me to form a response.

He carefully stepped closer to my bed. “Can I sit with you, Peter?”

I barely managed to nod as my stomach lurched. That doesn't even make any sense, I haven't even eaten anything in a day. There's nothing in my stomach to throw up. But if there were I know I would have gotten sick all over my bed. Tony would be so mad.

“Can you try to breathe with me?” He asked, sitting next to me. Not in front of me, not blocking the exit.

*That's what Tony would always tell me.*

I rapidly shook my head no, before I gagged.

Dry heaving *sucks*, I almost wish there was something in me to let out.

“Can I touch you?” He asked carefully, calmly. It almost makes me mad that he can be so calm when I’m just *not*.

I barely nodded as a few tears strayed out of my eyes. I didn’t mean to cry.

He gently maneuvered himself and me so that I’m practically in his lap as he holds me. One of his arms is metal, as I remember, but it didn’t feel so hard and cold like I would expect. He made it so my head was against his chest, it was warm. Comforting.

I could hear his heart. It reminds me of Tony. But this is different. But can it still be good?

I hiccuped as I tried not to cry anymore.

“Let yourself cry,” his voice came out softer than I ever would have thought possible.

And I did. I let out a sob, quickly covering my mouth to mask the atrocious noise.

He used his flesh hand to gently take mine away from my face.

The sobs that escaped me are so ugly and awful and I need to stop but I can’t. But he didn’t let me go. *He didn’t let me go.*

He stayed with me for what must have been at least an hour as I cried myself into exhaustion. I tried to fight off sleep as much as I could but I just *couldn’t*. I’m weak.

But he stayed.

I keep having nightmares, and they really are terrifying. In this I had peter have a nightmare about Tony attacking him, but I had one of my brother hurting me, and I didn't even try to stop him. They won't stop.

I'm still trying to figure my life out. More stuff has gone wrong, but I'm trying to focus on what has gone well, or at least didn't go wrong.

## a constant

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

I woke up with a cry. And I felt something, no someone, confining me, holding me down. I screamed and thrashed and that should have pushed them away from me but I must be even weaker because they only held me tighter. I could hear a voice but I couldn't make out what it was saying but I just want to *get away*.

And tears fell from my eyes and I kept screaming and crying and begging to be let go. And they did. But they stayed there. And I tried to push them away but they wouldn't budge. I knew I'm weak. I can't even get this person away from me. I can't even fight back. I can't even protect myself.

“Peter?” The voice was calm when it finally came through. It was nice.

“It's Bucky.” I-I think I like Bucky.

“It's just me, I'm here.” *Here*.

“I'm not going to hurt you.” *I'm safe?*

I finally relaxed a little, slumping back down. My breathing finally evening out as I calmed down.

“I'm sorry I scared you,” he apologized. I tried to mumble something but I'm so *desperate* for comfort I just crawled over and leaned against him. He wrapped his protective arms around me and I almost felt safe.

It's strange how when one person sees you vulnerable, they leave, and one panics, but one may stay. One may stay, and maybe that's enough.

“You had a nightmare,” he stated the obvious but I didn't mind. I mumbled in agreement and waited to see if he would continue.

I had a nightmare. Because why would I get a break when I'm sleeping? Why would I think that my mind would ever give me a break?

“Do you want to talk about it?” He asked, not pressing or forcing, it actually felt like I had the option.

“It was scary,” I whispered.

“They all are,” he agreed.

“Do you get nightmares?” I asked, before quickly realizing how rude that was.

Before I was able to retract my stupid question he answered honestly, “almost every night.”

“How do you deal with them?” *I can't handle them anymore.*

“Steve is almost always there. He stays with me through them and talks me down when I'm freaking out,” his voice filled with so much deep emotion it's surprising he didn't get lost in it.

“Is he your constant?” I asked. *Wait will he even understand what I mean?*

*I need constants to survive. Something I can depend on, not worry if it'll be there, something I can pin my hope on. Spider-Man was one of mine, but that got taken away too. I really love photography but the only reason it's not really a constant is because no one knows how much I love it.*

*But if you're someone's constant, or if someone is yours...that is something special, to say the least. I need that. Someone that I don't have to worry about if they'll leave, if I'll be too much for them. Someone that would listen and hold me as I cried, that would take the time to talk me down from a panic attack...or from...*

*But that's not something I can or should ever ask of anyone.*

“Yeah. Yeah he is. Is Tony yours?”

“I want him to be.” *But he can't.*

“But is he?” He pressed, gently.

“He's trying, but I can't ask any more of him. He already does so much more than I could ever expect of him.” *I just can't do that.*

“I'll try to be your constant.” *What? Wait what? There's...there's no way, I must have misheard him. It must have been wishful thinking.*

“What did you say?” I questioned, not believing that he really said what I hoped with all my heart that he said.

“I want to be your constant.”

## Chapter End Notes

I wrote another short chapter because I'm scared to sleep and this story is one of the only constants I have left

# Bucky

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Tony said he would be back by the time I wake up, but I guess he didn't expect me to be waking up in the middle of the night with a...horrific nightmare. But Bucky is here. Even when I thrashed and tried to get away he still stayed.

"Do you want to try to eat?" Bucky asked after a while. He actually asked if I want to *try*, he's not forcing me into it.

"I dunno if I can," I actually answered honestly.

"That's okay, maybe you can drink some water if you're up to it," he so calm, it's nice. *He actually is leaving it up to me? It's my choice? How is he not mad or disappointed? Probably because we don't know each other well enough for him to be disappointed in me.*

"I'm sorry I tried to fight you when I woke up," I murmured, shrinking in on myself. *What is wrong with me?*

"Don't worry about it, you were scared and trying to defend yourself," he reasoned for me. I don't understand how he can be so casual about it.

"I felt trapped." I don't know why I told him that.

"It's a horrible feeling to feel trapped," he agreed.

But he doesn't know what I mean. I always feel like I'm back at Homecoming. That the building is crashing down and I'm underneath, pressed against the ground. More and more weight pressing against me, pushing all the air out of my lungs. I'm screaming, *screaming* but I know no one is coming to save me. I have to save myself but I can't. *I just can't.*

"Can I ask what happened to make you feel trapped?" He asked, but not pressed. *How does he know something happened? But I guess if he understands the feeling, he could figure it out. But he shouldn't have had to know the feeling.*



I shrugged, knowing he knew that I do know. I didn't even tell Tony what really happened at Homecoming.

"I won't judge you," he assured me.

"It was my fault," I meant to just start there but my thoughts all decided to voice themselves aloud, "if I wasn't just so stupid it wouldn't have happened. Tony told me not to go after the Vulture but he was there. He's Liz's dad and I thought I could stop him because if I just let him go and he hurt people that would be my fault. I have to do something because I *can* do something but I was alone. Ned tried to talk me through it but he had to go and Happy wouldn't come because he doesn't like me. Or maybe didn't like me."

I finally took a breath but I still kept going, not giving him time to respond, I didn't realize how much I needed to let this out, "he, Tony, said that Happy likes me but he never came. He never came and he apologized but if he just came then maybe I could have been okay." *Am I talking about Homecoming or the day May found out?* "But I'm not okay, I just keep getting worse. I'm supposed to be getting better but I'm not. I'm trapped and it feels like I let the building crash down on me again. And that's my fault because I'm stupid and I didn't even think that he was trying to collapse the building. But he's smart and he trapped me under. And I couldn't breathe. I *couldn't breathe*. And I screamed and I screamed and I was so scared, so *so* scared but I knew no one would come."

I tried to even out my breathing but I can't, I can't, but I kept going, "I was crying and screaming but I knew I had to save myself because if I can't save myself then I'm not worth saving. But it *hurt*. So so much and I tried to lift it but so much weight was on me. It was crushing me and I should have died but why-why didn't I just let myself die? I could have just let myself die and no one could blame me because I should have died. I should have. But I couldn't just let him go and so I lifted all the rubble and rocks and metal and all that weight off me. But I don't think it ever really left me. I still can't breathe and I'm still screaming for help but no one's coming and I know they aren't, because why would they?"

I would think it would take him a few minutes to process everything I just spewed out of the depths of my mind, but it didn't.

"Why do you think you don't deserve to be saved?"

*Why would I? So many people could have died because of me. I let Ben die, and that's my fault. I could have stopped that shooter but I didn't. I didn't. And then at the ferry I almost killed hundreds of people. Hundreds. And then my stupidity and arrogance almost let the Vulture hurt who knows*

*how many people. I'm no better than the criminals I claim to try to stop.*

*"I hurt people." I hurt May, I hurt Tony, I killed Uncle Ben, I hurt Bucky, I hurt Happy. I can't stop hurting people.*

*But I'm hurt too.*

*"But you're trying, and that's all you can do," on some level I know he makes sense but my mind can't accept that. I didn't even try to stop Uncle Ben's killer and that's why Uncle Ben is dead. Because I didn't try. I'm no better than the man that killed him.*

*"I could have done more." I should have done more.*

*"You don't know the future, you couldn't have known what happened. But all you can do right now is trying to do the best to help yourself. And before you say that's selfish, it's not. Talking to people, getting help, it's not selfish. It's doing what's best for you and that's important." How can he care so much about me?*

*"I'm scared," my small voice sounds so lame and weak.*

*I'm always scared.*

*"I'm with you, every step of the way."*

## Chapter End Notes

I'm really really trying to be okay but I'm not because everything is so so wrong and so let's hope it'll work out somehow

# protocols

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Though he displayed a air of confidence and calm, anyone that actually knew him, not just the persona he plays, could tell he was panicking inside. After a long day of meetings with people who only care about his money, Tony finally was able to get away long enough to call Pepper.

It was strange for anyone to see a Stark shaking, his breathing too fast, his eyes so distant and *scared*.

The phone rang three times before she finally answered, just long enough for him to be set deeper into his anxiety.

“Pep,” he breathed out, his facade chipping away more and more.

“Tony, hey, it’ll be okay,” without him even saying anything she knew exactly what he needed to hear, “you’ll be back with him soon.”

“I left him, Pep,” he ran a hand over his tired face, not caring how he looks.

“You didn’t leave him forever, you’re coming back. You’ll be back with Peter and it’ll all be fine again. And he’s not alone, he’s safe,” she knew that the fear of Peter...doing something was strong in Tony’s mind.

“He’s with Bucky,” Tony didn’t bring himself to say more, he knows Pepper is smart enough to read between the lines.

“Things were doing better between you guys. And I know you would never let Peter stay with someone that you think might hurt him,” her soothing voice did wonders.

Tony sighed, knowing she’s right, as if she isn't always right.

...

Bucky stayed with me the whole time. Maybe he was telling the truth about wanting to be my constant. I hope so. Maybe I can actually let myself hope for this.

It was nice, curled up on the couch next to Bucky. Maybe he would stay.

Then Friday announced that Tony has arrived. *Tony actually came back.*

I had just gotten up from the couch when he walked in with such a big smile on his face. I actually hugged him first this time. I just lunged forward, wrapping my arms around him. Just as I realized that I touched The Tony Stark without consent he wrapped his arms around me.

*He actually came back.*

...

It was only after Peter had gone to sleep that Tony confronted Bucky.

“How did it go?” He asked, knowing Bucky would know what he’s referring to.

“It went well, I think. We talked a lot,” Bucky was so casual about the fact that Peter actually talked to someone.

“What do you mean by ‘talked a lot’, he opened up to you?” Tony couldn’t help the jealousy burning up in him because if Peter was supposed to open up to someone it was supposed to be him or even Sam. Not Bucky.

But he knew what the Stark was feeling, “I know you wanted him to talk to you, but isn’t the fact that he opened up at all a really good thing? Sometimes it’s easier to open up to a stranger than someone who you actually really care how they see you.”

“I hate that you’re right,” was all Tony’s response was. He wanted to ask what Peter told him so

badly, but he knew Bucky wouldn't betray Peter's trust like that. "How can I help him?"

"He's holding in a lot, a lot more than you or I even know about. You can talk to Sam about it more, since he's actually a professional, but the kid really does need help. I'm not sure the extent of what he needs, I don't even think any medications would be strong enough for him," Bucky explained. "And I'm saying that in the most caring way," he clarified.

"Helen Cho said she was working on some medications for him, but it's taking a long time since his metabolism is so different than anything she's ever seen before." He hadn't told Peter that yet.

"You know, me and Steve are always here for both you and Peter," he was so dead serious, it was almost scary.

"Yeah," Tony didn't meet his eye.

...

"Sam," Tony once again just barged into a conversation and stole Sam away.

"Yeah?" He asked, though he had a pretty good idea of where the conversation was heading.

"What is the best way to help Peter?" He didn't have time to dance around the issue, he's a fixer and he hasn't fixed anything yet.

"Well, it's a long process, Tony. It takes time," Sam began.

"Yeah, I know that. But he is still suffering and I don't know what to do to help him," if you listened closely you could almost hear the pleading in his voice.

Sam only took a second to think, "Well he definitely needs to be talking to a professional, if I'm that professional then that's perfect. If he wants someone else that works too, but he needs to be talking to someone trained to do this."

“I haven’t talked to him about talking to you again yet,” Tony admitted.

“Okay, well that needs to happen soon. These are very serious issues and we don’t even know all of it. I do think it’s best for him to stay here, it doesn’t seem like being with May was a good environment for him,” he continued.

“It wasn’t,” he agreed, waiting for Sam to say more.

“If you can figure out medications for him that would be great. But most importantly we have to make sure there’s always someone around. Not like a babysitter, that would makes him feel trapped. But always someone in the building that he can go to. And we have to make sure there are protocols for Friday that he can’t change.”

“I’ve already been working on that in my free time, he’s a smart kid though. I’m still trying to figure out how he got past the protocols I already have,” Tony ran his hand through his hair in frustration. He just wants his kid safe, but that’s a lot harder than it should be.

“Okay, well then it’s just being there for him and listening. Don’t judge, express disappointment, or try to make him guilty. That would just cause everything to escalate in a way you don’t want it to. Make sure he’s safe but don’t try to force him into anything, like saying something he’s not comfortable with or showing you his scars are anything,” Sam explained.

“Yeah, that makes sense,” he agreed, already thinking of ways to talk to Peter.

## Chapter End Notes

I am still trying...and that’s all I really can do right now

## for someone to not leave

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Tony came back this time. But he's just gonna leave again. That's how it works. But when he leaves again, he might not come back. And even if he does, he won't want me anymore.

He's going to marry Miss Potts in the summer. In the summer he is going to leave me. He's going to choose her over me, but that's how it's supposed to be. I can't be upset with him for being with her. I can't be upset with him for leaving me.

But I am upset. I'm scared. I'm scared because he will leave again and I'll be alone and then I'll just fall back into that person before he came.

I thought I was getting a little better, inching and inching towards improvement. But he'll leave and I'll fall back a million miles.

I thought I was getting better, but in so many ways I am just getting worse. If I am already getting worse what will be left by the time he's married? How am I supposed to live like this?

*I can't.*

Before Tony saved me, I was in...such a horrible place, the word horrible doesn't even do it justice. I wasn't living. But he came and he stayed with me and he helped me. He was my reason to hold on. But I'm going to lose him, I'm going to lose that. And I'll be left in an even worse place than I was in before because now I know what I'm losing. I know what I'm missing. And it *hurts*.

This is the first time I've let myself cry over his wedding.

I should be happy. And I am. I am happy he is happy. I am happy he found his love. But I'm *so scared*.

But I just have to keep up the facade another few months and then I can break.

I can't stand living without him here, without him with me. *God, I'm so selfish.*

It hurts to try to keep my crying quiet.

When I got depression, that is when my life stopped. That is when I began drowning in emotions and numbness and pain and tears and *so much pain*. And I'm scared that when he leaves again I'll just fall back into that hole and maybe when the waves crash harder again, he won't be there to help pull me out of the water. And maybe I'll finally drown. *Finally.*

It's already hard to swim when someone is trying to help you fight against all the merciless waves crashing and *crashing* against you. It's already hard to swim with the water is pulling you down, grabbing you and pulling you deeper and *deeper*. It's already hard to swim when you've been swimming for so long, *so long*. I can't keep trying to swim. I'm too weak. I've never had the strength to go forever, so why not stop now? Why not stop when I know I'll end?

I used to let myself hope that I would be able to live with Tony. Not just stay a little while, but really live here. To really belong here. But I know better than that. I know better. And I still did it anyway. Because that's how stupid I am.

Just a few months and my life will fall apart. Just a few months and I'll finally drown. *Just a few months and my life will end.*

I always knew I would live a short life.

But it's not like I was really living before.

I'll have to go back. Back to her. I'll have to be left alone with her again. Alone with all the things she says and all the things she does. I can't keep doing that. I can't go back to that. Back to her. I'm too weak.

*I'm always too weak.*

## Chapter End Notes

Both of my brothers are getting married this summer and the word scared doesn't do it



justice.

## to stay silent

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Maybe it's better if I don't talk at all. Not like never speak, but never really talk. Never open up. Never put my weight on anyone else.

Every time I try to open up, talk about how I feel, say my thoughts, I only hurt people. Every *every* time. I add weight to them. Even if they say I don't, I know I do. You can't just *not* add weight to someone when you talk to them. They don't deserve to take any of my weight, it's mine for a reason.

No matter how hard I try not to hurt anyone, I still do. I always do. Even if they say I'm not hurting them, that it's okay to open up, it's not. If I haven't hurt them already, I will. That's my reality. I want to be able to talk, to release, but I can't. I can't ever do that to anyone.

But the selfish part of me already has. I actually believe people when they say I'm not hurting them, that I'm not making it harder for them, that I'm not adding weight. But I know I am. I have to stop. But I'm so *desperate* for people, to be listened to. I need to shut that off. I *need* to or I'll only hurt more people that I care about. I would rather do this alone than hurt anyone else.

That's my reality.

I have to stay numb, that's the easiest way. If I could control my dissociation I would do that, but I can't. And I can only make myself go to that middle ground when I force myself to stop crying, but I can never get myself out.

I have to stop. Stop talking to people, stop shoving my weight on them, stop justifying my actions. I can't keep playing the victim when I'm the one hurting them. I keep putting myself first and I shouldn't. I shouldn't be so selfish. I have to stop.

*But part of me doesn't want to. Part of me is too scared to do this on my own.*

But I'm more scared to lose everyone. And that's how I keep losing people. And I'll lose everyone else. The best way to keep them is to keep them at a distance. Maybe they won't leave that way. Maybe they'll stay.

People can say they'll stay. People can *promise* they'll stay but that's not a promise anyone can make. You can want them to promise, you can think that they should, but they can't do that.

People have the right to leave. Just as much as I have the right to leave. I don't know if it applies to everyone, or only to certain situations, but with everyone that left me...yeah it hurt, but they have to right to. I have no right to stop them from doing what's best for them. And if what is best for them is to leave me, then that's what they should do. I can be hurt for a little while. But I can't be upset, that's not fair to them. I can't be upset for them putting themselves first.

And they should be put first, they're important. And my cruel need to release is not enough to overthrow their need to be okay. And so the best way to help them do that is to stop hurting them. It should be easy. I just have to make myself.

I used to cut to punish myself for every person I hurt. And the stinging after reminded me why I had to cut, and reminded me to stop hurting them. It was effective and I actually stopped putting weight on people, it was good. I need that back. I know I can find a way to be effective again.

## Chapter End Notes

I don't know what else there is to say

## to draw

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

I'm really confused.

I don't understand and I don't think I can. I don't think my mind will let me.

I understand why people leave, but why would they come back?

I don't understand.

But I don't think I *can* understand, I don't think my mind will let me. My mind never lets me.

That sounds stupid. I know it does, but that's how it is. My mind is so so loud and I try to see logic and reasoning but my emotions are so much stronger. Sometimes I even understand the logical point of view, but my emotions scream so much more and so I don't have a choice but to listen to that instead. Sometimes I really hate my reality.

But I still want to feel real. Sometimes when I dissociate, before I really float away I just don't feel alive. I don't feel real. I need to feel real.

Sometimes I would cut so I could see myself bleed. Because if I bled, that would have to mean I'm real, right? I have to be real because if I'm not real then I'm not valid. And if I'm not valid I can't be helped and I need help. *God*, do I need help.

Sometimes I wonder if it's okay to put a little bit of weight on people, on those that seem to care. Is *anyone* strong enough to do this on their own? Even Tony has Colonel Rhodes, Miss Potts, and Happy. But they care about him. Tony says he cares about me.

But doesn't that *have* to be true? Why else would he stay? I don't benefit him at all so there's no other reason for him to let me stay here. Wouldn't he have left by now if he didn't care a little bit about me?

*Am I just Peter Parker?*

*Am I nothing more?*

...

It...it was actually a good day.

Nothing horrific happened. I didn't have a panic attack. I didn't have a mental breakdown. My mind wasn't even too loud.

I just relaxed all day and it was nice. I can't remember the last time I just had a *good* day.

I never told Tony, or anyone really, but I do like to draw. Nothing special or good just little doodles for fun. It actually calms me down a lot.

It distracts me, but it doesn't even hurt me. Which is weird. It helps my mind quiet down a lot. Sometimes I'll even draw on my skin, having the sensation of doing something to my skin really really helps. It's even kept me from cutting a few times.

But I'm scared to draw on my skin now because what if someone sees? If I get sent back to May she'll make me take off my clothes and she'll see and she won't understand. But here, I know Friday is watching me. And she'll probably tell Tony and I don't want to have to explain to him. And so I just don't anymore.

But drawing on paper still helps. I have a small notebook filled with little drawings I've done. Pretty much all day today I've been doodling and it's been really really nice.

I was drawing still when I heard a knock at the door.

“Peter?” I let out a sigh of relief when it was Bucky’s voice that came through.

It's not like I don't want to see Tony it's just it's harder to explain stuff like this to him.

“You can come in,” I called out, knowing he wouldn't enter without permission.

He opened the door slowly, as to not startle me. And he always leaves it open when he comes in. *Giving me an escape.* It's like he knows all my triggers without me telling him.

Though I did close my notebook he still knew somehow, “you like to draw?” He asked, sitting down next to me on my bed.

I nodded, holding the drawings close to my chest. This is one thing that *is* mine.

“Steve draws a lot, it helps him calm down,” Bucky continued. *He didn't even press to see my drawings.*

I loosened my hold on them, “Really?”

“Yeah, he actually draws a lot. And they're really good,” he chuckled “I'm sure he would love to draw with you sometime if you're up to it.”

I opened my notebook again, “that sounds nice.”

I didn't even think it was *possible* for me to have a good day.

## Chapter End Notes

I actually did have a good day yesterday. It was the first good day in a long long time and it was nice. I just drew all day.

# all but red

## Chapter Notes

TW: lots of talk about self harm scars and past cutting and such

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Do you ever get in one of those moods where you just need to cry? But you can't? Yeah...that's me right now.

I'm not really sure what's wrong with my mind right now. I don't feel myself. Maybe I should be freaked out. It's almost like the middle ground, but I don't have that panic that always comes with that. I feel the tears pressing at the back of my eyes but I can't let them out. I want to...for once. But they won't come.

I feel like I should talk to someone. Maybe they can help. But who would understand? I'm not sure if this is dissociation. It seems like there are different kinds and ways of dissociation. Maybe this is just another way. I'm not sure.

I feel like I should do something. Like I should be feeling something.

*I don't really feel real.*

*No. No, I can't do this again.*

But there are not a lot of ways to feel real. Cutting, crying, throwing up, scratching, talking to someone, someone being here with me. *But no one's here. And no one's coming.*

*Maybe if I asked for Tony he would come. Or maybe Bucky.*

*But they have so much weight on them already...*

*I have to be careful with Bucky. He knows so much but that doesn't mean he still doesn't carry so*

*so much weight. More than I'll ever know. I can't treat him like he's invincible. Because he's not. He's strong. Undoubtedly.*

*But my weight might be too much. It's too much for me so why not for him?*

*But I need to feel real. Why can't I feel real?*

It's like my body doesn't know how to cry anymore.

*Why do I have to struggle through every day?*

When two people are drowning one can save themselves by pushing off the other one to reach the surface and finally *breathe*. But that's not right.

But if one isn't drowning and the other is? Don't you have to go into the water to save them?  
*That's weight. That's not right.*

But they aren't here to save me. No. They are just here to help me along, to help teach me to swim.

*I can't even cry. I cry all the time and I can't even cry right now.*

They aren't meant to save me. I can't put that on anyone. Not even Iron Man. Because past all that 'iron' is a man that's really tired, but he's still holding on somehow. He isn't unbreakable and I can't put more on him.

I can't push him deeper into the water when we are both struggling to swim.

I feel like my mind is inside trying to break its way out. But my body is so *far away* and is watching my mind go insane but it doesn't feel it.

I'm probably dissociating, but I don't know why it's happening so much more often nowadays. I'm not even sure why it's happening right this second.



This is just one of those things that happens sometimes, but it's so hard to do on my own.

*If I draw on myself will I feel more real?*

*I haven't drawn on myself in so long...I miss it.*

I finally got myself up from being curled up on my bed and grabbed some markers. I quickly made my way into the bathroom and prepared myself. *It's been too long since I've done this.*

It only took a moment of thought to know what I would draw first. In the safety of the bathroom I rolled down my pants, exposing my scar covered thigh. I grabbed the red marker and began tracing over every scar I could see.

*They're so faded. They're not supposed to fade away. I don't want them to.*

*I guess I never went deep enough.*

I used to be able to see over eighty cuts on the one thigh. Now you can only twenty four scars, and that is when you are trying to look for them. Only twenty four.

That's not enough.

I had designated my right thigh for cuts, and my left thigh for drawings.

I then took every color except for red and made line after horizontal line on my left thigh. It looked pretty, all the colorful lines overlapping and blending in with each other.

But my right thigh isn't beautiful. Cutting isn't beautiful. It isn't pretty. It is blood and stinging and pain and numbness and being trapped trying to find freedom. It's a cage that looks like an open door. It's a hole you can't dig your way out of. But it looks so inviting.

Not enough people realize the amount of emotional suffering one has to go through that physical pain is the only way out.

My left thigh is so colorful. So bright.

The right one is so bare. Only a twenty four lines. Maybe less, maybe it was just wishful thinking for some of those scars to still be visible.

I should be happy, relieved, that my scars are fading. But I'm not. I don't want them to fade away. I don't want them to disappear. To leave. I can't lose them too.

I don't want to forget. I don't want to pretend this didn't happen. It's a part of me whether anyone wants it to be or not. Maybe the worst part of me...I don't know. But it is real. That is real.

My mind is starting to sync back up with my body. Like before I just watched my body move and now I'm starting to feel it more.

As I start to feel more real again, my mind only grows louder.

I had to take a second to clutch my head and *breathe* for a moment, not having been prepared for such an increase in volume from my brain.

After a moment I ran one of my hands over my left thigh, tracing my fingers over the lines.

There's this design I used to do, it did a good job distracting me. It was just a bunch of curved and squiggly lines and circles in a big mess. But I would color them in, in every color but red, and it would look pretty. I could make it as big or small as I wanted and either way it distracted me. It was a constant.

I began that again. Random circles and curves and squiggles. And I filled it all in. It's good. I can't leave until it's completely filled in. Until it's complete.

It's pretty. It's not large but not small either, it kind of looks like a flower. It's weird how the colors look different on my skin than on paper.

My mind isn't so loud right now.

...

Tony came into the room, purpose etched into his features, “Wanda, do you know where Sam is?”

“Um..I do not recall seeing him today. Is everything okay?” She immediately rose from the couch she was on, previously reading a book.

“I need to talk to him,” he walked right out of the room, still on a mission. She followed.

“Peter,” she didn't have to read his mind to know what the worry was about. “Is he okay?”

He huffed out a breath, “I just need to find Sam. Friday, I thought you said he was in there.”

After a small apology, Friday led him to the right room, Wanda right on his tail.

He didn't bother to excuse his interruption, yet again, “Sam, I need to ask you something.”

That quickly got him from his casual posture to full on therapist mode.

Not caring that Wanda was right there, Tony went on and asked anyway, “is there any reason that Peter would be bringing markers into the bathroom with him? Friday alerted me that he did that, and is still in the bathroom but has no physical harm.”

Sam let out a sigh of relief, “oh, that's a common coping technique for people who struggle with self-harm. It's a good thing, Tony.”

“Good,” he scoffed, “good that he needs to cope with something and isn't coming to anyone?”

“It's good that he's looking for other ways to help himself,” Sam reasoned.

“Should I go check on him?” He asked, so clearly out of his domain of knowledge.

“If he comes to you then that's great, but give him some space right now. The last thing you want is for him to feel like he doesn't have privacy. That's one of the things May took from him. If he feels that way here it'll be a lot harder to have trust,” Sam explained further.

“He's right, Stark,” Wanda voiced in, cautiously.

Tony then turned to her for the first time in that conversation, “have you talked to him, since...”

“Since what?” Sam asked, only to be ignored.

“No, I can't face him,” she couldn't face Stark either, with her eyes drawn down.

Sam repeated his question.

“It...I don't know what it was,” for once Tony Stark did not have the words to describe a situation.

“Whatever it is,” he addressed both of them, “if you are avoiding Peter it has to be clear that it is not his fault. And even if you say it isn't he probably will take the blame anyway.

Tony sucked in a breath, that very plausible reality settling even more fear in him. You could see the tears brimming in Wanda's eyes.

“I messed up,” Tony breathed out.

...

I decided that maybe taking up Bucky's offer to draw with Steve may not be a terrible idea.

After who even knows how long, I finally exited the bathroom, fresh drawings on my leg. It was nice.

## Chapter End Notes

I've been dissociating a lot more often than I ever have before and that's scary. It feels nice sometimes, to just float away for a while. But sometimes I feel like I'm not real, and that's dangerous.

On the bright side, I have finally gotten past my fear of drawing on myself again (specifically my parents finding out I draw on myself because they really hate that). And it's really helping.

# happiness

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

I shouldn't ask. I know better. I know I know better. But it's just really hard to stay calm when my notebooks are all filled to the brim and my markers are drying out. It's not even like I can use the markers on the paper anyway because I decided they are for my skin and therefore they have to be for my skin because that ruins them anyway.

My mind needs to stop being so loud loud *loud loud LOUD!*

My hands are shaking and there's nothing I can do to stop it.

*I'm ready to smash my head open just to get it to be quiet quiet it won't be quiet...*

I could ask Tony for a new notebook but it's not a necessity and I don't need to do that to him. And yeah I know he has the money but it's still not a necessity. *But it's necessary for my mental state.*

I'm probably pinning too much on just some bad drawings.

I hate myself for...

I mean I know better, I should be *better* than this. I know it's not May's fault that we didn't have as much money. But I shouldn't be relieved that Tony does have money just because I miss being able to...

I need to stop. Stop worrying about money. I need to stay quiet, I know better than to say anything. Anytime I ever said anything to May I knew she would say no, but I still asked anyway because I'm an idiot. I know better than to ask because she'll just feel bad and she'll just be reminded even more that I'm a burden. She would be so much better off without me.

But if I...died, a funeral costs a lot of money. But in the long run it would help.

But I'm not there anymore. I don't have to worry about that anymore because she doesn't want me.

*Has she called? Does she still want to talk to me?*

*Loud. Loud. Loud loud loud loud loud loud loud loud!*

*It won't stop.*

Tony said he can get May to leave me alone, but does that mean he blocked her, or she just stopped trying? I can ask but then he'll think I want to go back to her and I don't want to go back to her. I can't go back to her. I can't *I can't please don't make me go back I can't do that I can't make it I'm so weak and I won't be able to survive and it'll get so so much worse and I can't do that I'm supposed to be getting better but I can't get better there.*

I always hated it when I would hear May talk about money. It's not like she actively tried to hide or show it to me but I would still hear it. And the snake always tightens so so much harder and I know that she doesn't deserve to have to take care of me.

If I just ran away, everything would be so much easier.

But I never considered that they would find me. I could hide from the police, but if Tony had come after me...he would be able to find me. And I would be in an even worse place than I started.

I just want to cry. I need to do something I can't deal with this loud *loud loud loud* all alone.

I want Tony here, but I already put him through so much. I need someone here, but the thought just makes the snake so much tighter. The thought that I'll add more weight to them. That even when they say I'm not adding weight, I really am because I always am. But they say I don't because they don't want to upset me but I know better. *I know better. But I need someone here.*

The tears are pressing at the backs of my eyes and I desperately need them to fall. I need something if I can't have someone.

I haven't cried in a few days. It's nice to cry again. *But I still wish someone was here. But no one's*

*coming. No one ever is.*

*Why can't anyone ever be here?*

*What did I do to be like this? So so messed up? That everyone leaves? That in the end...I'll always be alone?*

The tears don't want to come out and my mind is only getting louder and louder and *louder*.

*Sometimes...I think I'm okay...and then I remember all the reasons that I'm not...*

*I'm so so tired. But then again, when am I not?*

...

"Tony?" I asked. I shouldn't have though because we are watching a movie and it's calm and nice and I shouldn't ruin it but I already did because I ruin everything. "Nevermind."

"Kid, you can ask me anything. What's on your mind?" He comforted me after telling Friday to mute the movie.

"It's stupid, I shouldn't ask. I know better and-" he cut me off before I could really get into my ramble.

He turned to face me more, "no question you have is stupid. I'm open to answer your questions, okay?"

*But this will just hurt him. I shouldn't have said anything, silence is better than saying too much.*

"I just-I was just wondering about May." I wish my voice didn't crack when I said her name.



After a moment, he came up with a question of his own, “do you want to see her again?”

“No!” I immediately regretted shouting because that’s too loud, too much.

*But he said ‘see’ not stay, but seeing her may just lead to staying with her. And I can’t stay with her I can’t I can’t do that.*

“Hey, hey, Pete?” He waited until I was looking at him again. Even though I pulled my sleeves over my hands, I doubt he missed that they are shaking. “You don’t have to go back to her, and you don’t have to see her, okay?”

“But I’m not yours,” and I immediately regretted saying that once I saw the sadness in his eyes. “I- I mean you don’t have custody over me, May does.”

*Wow, that was a brilliant recovery.*

Okay so even my inner monologue is drenched in sarcasm.

“Yeah, my lawyers and I have been working on that,” he said it so casually as if that wasn’t the biggest news ever.

“What do you mean?” *Is he saying what I think he’s saying? Or is my mind just being too hopeful?*

He smiled, “I’m working on the papers to transfer your custody to me. And then from there, if you want me to, the papers to adopt you.”

*He-he wants me? He actually wants me? That...there’s no way that can be true, there’s no way he could ever want someone like me as his...as his son.*

“You actually want me?” My voice was so so small.

He actually let out a soft laugh, “of course, kid. Why do you think you’ve been staying here if I didn’t want you? Okay don’t answer that, but I do in fact, undoubtedly, want you.”

I don't think I've ever smiled so big before, "I just-I never thought you would actually want me. I know I've kind of always thought of you as a dad since I met you, but like in the best way because since I lost Uncle Ben I needed someone and you came. And somehow, for some reason, you stayed. And I've always had that stupid dream that I would be able to stay here permanently but I never thought it would actually be a reality because I didn't think you would ever think of me or want me as your kid."

*I just went on a long ramble, I said way way too much...but he doesn't seem to mind?*

"Peter, I've always thought of you as my kid. I know we never really talked about the whole you calling me Dad thing, but...I really like it," he admitted with another smile. Not his typical Tony Stark smile that he flashes to all the cameras. No, this one is softer and genuine. I like it a lot more.

I know he noticed that I moved to lean against him, my head on his shoulder, but I don't mind that he noticed. He didn't seem to mind either as he wrapped an arm around me.

"I can call you Dad?" I asked, timidly.

"Absolutely," he answered so unwavering, so unafraid, so honest.

"Thank you...Dad." I could feel the happiness radiating off of him.

I haven't smiled that much in a long, long, time.

## Chapter End Notes

I really did plan on posting yesterday but then I had a bad panic attack and after that I just needed to rest. But that didn't really work out because I had another nightmare, but in this nightmare I had a panic attack. Because why would I ever be able to get a break from my mind? It's extremely frustrating.

I wrote the first part before my panic attack, and the second part this morning. I really did try to give y'all a happier chapter, or at least a happier half of a chapter, because I need some hope in my life. I know it's cheesy and lame but whatever. I figured giving Peter some happiness would be a good start to getting my own.



# custody

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

*Wait. What about May? She would never let Tony have custody over me. This could never work. I actually let myself believe that he would adopt me but that could never happen. I let myself really, truly, hope for something and I just get even more destroyed...*

*Tony said he was working on it, and I do believe he has the best lawyers out there but she would never cooperate.*

“Peter, you okay?” Bucky asked gently. “You stopped drawing.”

It really is nice to just relax and draw with Steve and Bucky. Even though Bucky doesn’t actually draw, he reads, but he’s still here with us and it’s nice. But I’m supposed to relax but I just can’t because Tony will never get custody and I’ll have to go back.

“We can take a break if you want,” Steve offered. He has this certain tone of voice he uses whenever anyone is upset, it’s really is comforting.

“I don’t know,” I mumbled, not really in focus. *I don’t know what I want. I don’t want them to leave, but I can’t fall apart if they stay. I don’t want to stop drawing because that’s calming, but I also can’t focus. I really don’t know.*

“Peter, whatever you’re feeling, it is valid,” Bucky’s voice was soft.

It’s taken me a long time to realize...but my feelings are valid. Even if they make no sense, are not logical, are not set in reality, they are still my feelings. And my feelings are valid because that’s how I feel. Maybe I don’t always see and understand reality, maybe I overreact, but it’s still how I feel. My reality is still my viewpoint on life even if it isn’t the same reality as everyone else. But it’s still valid. And I’m glad that I finally realized it.

*But does that mean I can fall apart with them in the room?*

“I’m scared.” *I know that. That is one thing I do know because that is what I feel despite how*

*stupid or illogical it may be.*

After the two super soldiers made eye contact Bucky gently asked, “What are you scared about?”

“May,” I couldn't get anything more than just her name out, though it did come out in more of a whimper than a real word. *God, I'm so weak. I'm supposed to be Spider-Man, strong and brave and smart and fearless and better than this. Tony wants me to be better than this but I'm not, I'm not better and I never will be.*

“It's okay to be scared,” Steve tried to assure me but that only made the snake tighten more.

“It's not, though. It's not okay because I'm Spider-Man and I'm supposed to be better. But I'm just Peter Parker. I'm weak and scared and stupid and worthless and a burden to everyone and-” he didn't let me finish.

“Peter,” Bucky said my name with such seriousness I was too scared to not make eye contact with him, “I do not ever want you to say those lies about yourself ever again. I can't stop you from thinking it, and you can't stop your mind from thinking it, but you do not have to say it. Saying it makes it seem more real and true but it's not. You are not *just* Peter Parker, you *are* Peter Parker. Which means you are brave and clever and funny and brilliant and so *so* strong.”

It was quiet as they allowed me time to process his words.

“May won't let Tony have custody,” it came out in a whisper.

*I shouldn't refer to him as my Dad, that gives too much false hope.*

“Have you talked to him about this?” Steve asked.

“I'm scared to.” *He's so happy and excited and I'll just ruin it. I can't ruin another thing, I can't be that cruel.*

“He cares about you, more than I think I've ever seen him care about anything. Whatever happens, he's not going to go down without a fight.” *Steve has a point. Tony is a fighter, he will not stop*

*until he gets what he wants. He's also a fixer, he can fix this. Yeah...this, this may be something he can fix.*

...

“So...Pep?”

“What did you do, Tony?” She immediately accused, looking up at him from her work.

“I told Peter that I’m working on getting the custody papers,” he kept his calm.

Before reacting she asked, “and how did he respond?”

He smiled so big, “I have never seen him more happy.”

“That’s wonderful Tony!” She finally let her excitement free as she jumped into his arms. “You’ve been working on this since he came and it’s finally all coming together!”

“Yeah,” he chuckled, “It’s finally coming together.”

...

“T-Tony?” I didn’t miss the disappointment in his eyes when I didn’t call him Dad.

“Yeah, kid?” He tried to hide it with a smile, but I know what his real smiles look like, “what’s on your mind?”

I cast my eyes down, “um...” *If I don’t just say it now I never will*, “I just, I don’t...I’m scared about the custody papers.” And that is when I realized how bad that sounds, “it’s not that I don’t want you to adopt me! No, it’s not like that, it’s not. But I know May would never just let you have custody and I don’t know what she’ll do but it’ll be so hard and I don’t want you to be burdened with so much only for it to not work.”

“Okay, Pete, hey. Can you try to take a deep breath?” *What? No, no, he’s just worrying about me but he’s supposed to be worrying about May!*

“No, no, Tony you don’t understand!” *I know better than to raise my voice*, “She won’t let you have me! And then I’ll be trapped again and I can’t be trapped!” *I know better than to show how upset I am*, “Please?” *What am I asking?* “Dad...” *But he’s not May...*

I was desperately clutching and pulling at my hair, trying to get my head to stop being so loud loud loud. He placed his hands over mine, knowing better than to grab the wrists, and tried to gently pull my hands away from my head. “I’m here, Pete. And I won’t let you be trapped again, okay?”

*But he can’t promise that. That’s not a promise anyone can make.*

I couldn’t keep myself from shaking as my mind just kept screaming over and over again how I’ll have to go back to May, how I’ll be alone with her again, *how I won’t be strong enough to last with her. I won’t be able to survive.*

“Peter, I will fight as hard as I can to make sure you never have to go back if you don’t want to,” there was not a hint of doubt in his voice.

I finally got my breathing to even out, I didn’t even notice until then that he was still holding my hands, preventing me from digging my nails into my head or ripping out my hair.

“It’s so hard...” *everything. Everything is hard nowadays.*

“I know Pete, but I’m with you. Every step of the way.”

## Chapter End Notes

Thank you so so much for the patience guys, I really appreciate it. I’m sorry about that whole thing though I know it’s really annoying and rude but I wasn’t sure how else to do it. It’s been a really crazy week..

# privacy

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Peter had just gone to sleep when Wanda approached Tony.

“Stark?” Though Peter was in a different room, her voice was still soft.

Running a hand through his messy hair he yawned, “Yeah?”

“Do you think Peter thinks I’m upset with him? Because I haven’t been around him?” Worry was etched into her features.

He paused to look at her before answering honestly, “he hasn’t said anything about it. But I know him and he most likely does blame himself.”

With her arms crossed over her chest she took a breath, “it’s not his fault.”

“I know it isn’t,” before he could say anything more he was cut off by his phone ringing. He was about to decline the call when he saw who it was from and quickly excused himself with a small apology.

“Do you have anything?” He asked the second the accepted the call.

“Stark, you know this takes time-” the man on the phone began before Tony cut him off.

“I did not hire the best lawyers in the country just for you to say it takes time. He is *my* kid and I’m not letting him go back to her,” he seethed.

“The best way to help us move this faster is to have evidence of her being an unfit guardian,” he reasoned.



Tony's knuckles turned white as he clutched the phone even harder, "she emotionally abused and manipulated him his whole life. There's no physical evidence of it."

"Then he's the evidence-" once again the lawyer was quickly cut short.

"No," he left no room for argument, "Peter is not going to be evidence in a case against his Aunt. That will only destroy all the progress we've been making."

The man sighed, "having him testify is the best way to prove what she's done. I can see if I can work something out so he doesn't have to see her, but I'm not sure how else to go about this."

"What about Sam Wilson?" The thought suddenly popped into his head, "He's Peter's therapist."

"I'll see what I can do."

And with that he hung up the phone.

...

I'm supposed to be asleep, I know I am. He would be so angry if Friday told him that I woke back up only minutes after falling asleep.

I didn't mean to listen in on Tony's conversations but I couldn't help it. I still don't understand what happened with Wanda, but that man on the phone...that lawyer, he wants me to go against May. Tony said I'm not going back there, but he wouldn't lie, right? He said I didn't have to see May but the man said I need to.

*Is he just saying things to make me trust him? He...he wouldn't lie, right?*

He said if I see her it will destroy all my 'progress'. He doesn't think I can handle it. I know I can't. And he knows it. He knows just how weak I am. They all know.

*He-he isn't her. He isn't. He isn't! I know he isn't but the way he said it sounded just like her. But*

*he said it in a good way and her...hers was supposed to be a good way but it was just so wrong. It felt like acid hitting my ears when she said it but when he said it I only heard her voice and I don't want to hear her voice. He's not going to hurt me though, not like her, but it's what she would say and I can't do that again. But he didn't mean to. But she didn't either.*

*I don't want to hear her voice when Tony speaks...*

“Master Parker, would you like me to inform Boss that you have woken up?” Friday’s voice made me flinch so hard it hurt.

“No!” I quickly lowered my volume after that shout, “no, no, Friday please don’t tell him.”

“As part of a new protocol Boss made, I am required to inform him,” she announced.

“Wait what? What new protocol?” *Tony made more protocols for me? What does that mean, he's having Friday monitor me even more? Do I not even have privacy here?*

Before Friday could answer, there was a knock at the bedroom door. Even though I knew Friday told him I’m awake, I still figured pretending to sleep couldn’t hurt. I don’t really feel like talking to him anyway.

He didn’t open the door, just spoke through it, “Pete? I know you’re awake, can I come in?” *At least he asked before barging in.*

“Okay...” I mumbled, barely loud enough for him to hear, still refusing to open my eyes.

“Hey kid...did you have another nightmare?” I know it’s childish and stupid but I’m exhausted and upset and don’t really feel like being mature, so I ignored him and kept my eyes closed. “Kid, what’s wrong?”

*If he's making new protocols for me that means he doesn't trust me either. So now May and Tony don't trust me. I...I don't know what to do about that. I don't blame them, but I can't make them trust me. There's nothing I can do about it...I'm just trapped again.*

I finally opened my eyes, I guess there was a look in them he was not prepared for as his frown deepened even further, “you don’t trust me.” It didn’t come out as a question and I didn’t mean it to.

“Why would you say that?” He looked genuinely confused and that just made my snake tighten a lot harder.

“Friday said you made more protocols for me,” saying it out loud just made it sound even more stupid but I know how I feel.

He sat down next to me, I didn’t bother sitting up, “Kid...that’s for your safety. The protocols are just so I know if you need help.”

*But how far does that go? That could mean so many things...for when I can’t sleep? Nightmares? Self-harm? Panic attacks? Dissociation? Crying? Not eating? What does he mean?*

*“How far does that go?” Will he even be honest with me? If he doesn’t trust me anyway then he has no reason to tell me the truth.*

“It tells me your vitals and symptoms and so I can decide if I think you may need me,” he explained. *But what if I don’t want him? I know that sounds horrible but sometimes I want to just let myself fall apart and let myself hurt for a while.*

*I don’t always want to be fixed. But he’s a fixer.*

“But can’t I call for you when I need you?” I asked.

With the sad look he gave me I know what he wanted to ask but didn’t have to. *Would I really call him? Probably not...*

*But I did call for him a few times. And that isn’t nothing. It isn’t.*

I really don't know how custody and adoption works, I've read a lot about it but I know this isn't realistic, sorry. But what I care more about is trying to make the emotions and fears as realistic as I can so whatever.

I'm sorry this chapter is so bad, I'm not really sure why but this chapter just wouldn't flow out like the others do.

My mind wasn't even as bad today. But I also didn't feel really here, I don't think I was dissociating though so I'm not sure what was happening. It wasn't that middle ground, but I wasn't quite here. One of my triggers was even mentioned during class and my mind wasn't even as bad as it was last time that happened so that's good. It's weird, I've gotten worse at numbing myself on purpose, but I've been dissociating way more often than I ever have before. I'm just not sure anymore.

## to not feel

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

*I don't want to feel, I don't want to feel, I don't want to feel, I don't want to feel I don't want to feel  
I don't want to feel idon'twanttofeelidon'twanttofeelidon'twanttofeel...*

*But I do.*

*I used to be able to force myself numb, and it was really helpful. I could numb out panic attacks at school and I could numb myself out of crying when May was around. But I've been getting worse at it. I can't force myself numb like I was able to for so long and that's terrifying.*

*But I have been dissociating a lot more often which is kind of nice because then I can float away and floating away is good. But I can't control when it happens and I can't make myself really get in or out of it.*

How I think of dissociation, I think of it, at least for me, as having different levels of extremes. Like for me it starts as me not feeling real, not feeling alive. And then I started to float away. And my mind isn't in sync with my body anymore. The farthest gone I've ever been is where it felt exactly like I was dreaming. I couldn't see clearly, I watched my body move but my mind felt separate from it. Like I was watching my body but it's like a strange calmness over me. Part of me knows I should be panicking but I'm just not.

I just want to float away. I don't want to panic, I don't want to be hurting, I don't want to cry. I don't want to feel right now. I want to be numb for a while but it's not really working. The most I'm getting is apathetic and that's not really helpful. I kind of feel myself going to that middle ground which is better than panicking right now but it still hurts.

...

It was only after Tony's frustrating phone call with his lead lawyer, and his worrisome conversation with Peter that he realized that he does in fact have evidence. Because of course Tony Stark records everything for moments like this.

Friday does most of the recording, she has everything that happened within the compound and everything through his Iron Man suit. So, he has proof of every panic attack, every nightmare,

every time he begged Tony not to take him back. And with the suit...he has the recording of Peter jumping...

But it's not like The Tony Stark would ever leave home without a little something more.

"Friday, show me the recordings from my watch, the ones before..." he demanded, finally haven gotten to the lab to get some work done. He didn't need to finish the sentence for Friday to catch on.

"Of course Boss," and she began displaying all the video and audio the watch he always wears had recorded.

And the video displayed May Parker's apartment. Her yelling was so clear it was like he was back there...and it was like he was back, waiting outside the bathroom door Peter had locked himself in while May screeched at them.

"Does the video show all of it?" He wanted to turn his eyes away, but he couldn't.

"Yes, Boss," Friday answered, as remorseful as an AI is capable of.

"Stop the video," he finally looked away, not quite ready to relive all of that.

But he has the evidence of the abuse.

...

He called it abuse. When he talked to that man on the phone he called everything May did abuse. I know what she did wasn't okay, but I don't know if it's actually abuse.

I mean, I've read a lot about it and I relate to all the signs and I have some of the symptoms of being abused but maybe I'm wrong. I'm probably overreacting.

I'm scared though that maybe May is right and it's just my perception of reality is wrong. I know it

isn't reality set but I can't help the way my mind is but maybe it's not as bad as it feels and maybe they aren't actually abusive I'm just over sensitive and feel too much and don't understand reality.

*It's scary that I'm more scared that it isn't abuse than that it is.*

If it is, then I was right all along and I saw the signs correctly. But if i'm wrong then I messed up everything and I really am just over sensitive and I'm freaking out for nothing.

My entire life people have always told me that I am *so lucky* to have her. How blessed I am that she is my Aunt. And I know I'm lucky, more than I'll ever be able to comprehend. She took me in, she put a roof over my head, clothes on my back, sent me to a good school, put food on the table, and even would give me gifts. She gave me more than I deserve. She wouldn't do that unless she cared, right? It's so confusing...

But I never felt safe with her. I was always looking over my shoulder, always terrified to upset her. I couldn't stand being around her, and it's not the stereotypical teenage angst or whatever. My mental health dies when I'm around her, I'm terrified all the time. It's not okay.

## Chapter End Notes

I just I don't know what I'm doing I don't know what to do and I can't handle being like this anymore I just I don't know  
I'm trying and trying but nothing is working and I'm not getting better and I can't handle it if anything I'm just getting worse I hate it I can't handle this anymore I'm not strong enough  
I don't plan on doing anything stupid but I just I don't know anything anymore and I can't stand it

## to know how to do this

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

I didn't do anything. But I wanted to. I needed to. I needed to physically do *anything* but I didn't. Not because I didn't want to, I couldn't. With Friday monitoring me all the time I can't get away with anything. And even if I could my nails are too short and there's no way I would be able to get to a blade.

I drew though. Just small little drawings, filling up any tiny gap in my notebook. I know I could ask Tony for a new notebook but I haven't. I shouldn't...

I don't know how to do this. I don't know how to talk to people without seeming manipulative and controlling and needy and cruel. If I talk, I just add weight to them, and if I don't they get worried. I hurt them either way.

I feel bad when I have good days. It makes it feel like maybe I'm actually okay and I've just been playing the victim of my mind but I actually have no excuse to not be better.

I feel bad when I have bad days. I only hurt everyone. I hurt myself, which doesn't really matter. But I hurt the people I care about, and that's not okay. That matters.

*I feel bad for existing.*

*I often wish I could disappear. Not die. No, that could hurt the people around me. But just disappear. Fade away into that nothingness I relished in after I failed my attempt to escape. If I just disappeared I couldn't hurt anyone anymore.*

*But Tony would come after me. He came after me last time. But that...that was different. No one can keep me from fading away.*

*But then again, if I could just float away that would work better. My body would be here but my mind would be long long gone. But I can't control that. If I could I would dissociate almost all the time.*



*There really is nothing I can do. No way to escape.*

Drawing just isn't enough. I can't control floating away. I can't seem to be able to disappear. I can't just die because I would only fail at that again. Shutting everyone out just seems to hurt them. But letting them in is too much. I hurt them too much. There's no way for me to be free without everyone else being hurt.

I know cutting doesn't actually fix anything, but it helps me breathe. And that's good. It distracts me from everything else. It cuts away at the snake holding so so tightly. It doesn't even really hurt that much, my healing gets rid of the cuts really really quickly. So there really isn't any harm.

*But that would hurt Tony.*

*I think he would care.*

*Bucky too. Maybe Happy. Possibly Steve. There's a small chance that Wanda could possibly care.*

*I care about all of them.*

So if I can't cut, then what else can I do?

There are only so many things that help me feel real.

*But when I think about it...talking to people, someone being here, that helps like no other.*

But that's too much to ask of anyone. No one will hold me as I cry. No one will rub my back as I throw up. No one will talk me down from each panic attack. No one will listen to me at 3am when I just woke up from a nightmare. No one will stay with me when I'm too scared to be alone. No one will be here when I want to cut. No one will stop me.

But if I say that, that will only hurt them more.

I know they are trying. And I know it seems like I don't appreciate it, but I do more than I can ever

be able to explain. *I wish I could explain it.* I know it could seem like they only make me worse but it's not them. *It's not their fault. It's mine.* It's my mind that makes everything so dark, so bad. *My mind does it, not them.* I know it seems like I'm not getting better. *Maybe I'm not.* I know it seems like I never will. *Maybe I won't.*

But there's no way to be able to ask people to stay. Because they have every right to leave. They have no obligation to me. At all. And it is *not* their fault whatever happens to me. It's mine. It's my decision. I can't even blame my mind because I'm the one that chooses it.

Blame me. I can't let anyone else have the blame.

Maybe I'll be okay. One day. There is stuff I want to look forward to, stuff I want to do. But I don't know how I'll get there.

## Chapter End Notes

So I was checking this yesterday during school and some people saw and started making fun of me for reading fanfiction so that's great...no it sucks even something that helps me gets made fun of.

I really don't know how to do this. There's no way for me to be able to do anything.

## to feel fine

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Tony asked me last night if I would want to go out to dinner with Bucky and Steve. He said they asked if they could take me out to hang out. But I can't help thinking that this is just a way for Tony to be free from me for a while so he can actually get some work done. Since I've been here he put all other issues and work related things on hold for the most part. He's probably so behind.

"You ready, kid?" Tony asked, he had been helping me get ready.

"Where am I going?" I questioned, fixing my sweater. He said I didn't have to wear anything really fancy so I, or really Tony picked, a nicer sweater. But the only reason Tony picked is because he knows the stress of trying to decide myself when I don't even know where I'm going would freak me out and he wants me calm.

"I already told you, Underoos, it's a surprise," he chuckled.

I really want to have fun. I really shouldn't be worrying. But I am.

I don't know where I'm going and even though Tony helped me pick out my outfit I don't know if it's too much or not enough. And we are going out to *eat* and eating around people is so hard. I know I'm supposed to eat but it just makes me feel worse. Food is a bad thing. If I don't eat I get really lightheaded but when I eat, I get super nauseous and I don't want that. Usually the lightheadedness goes away after a couple hours of being awake. But the nausea just gets worse over time and then my mind gets louder, berating me for eating because I don't really need to eat. It's not like I'm starving it's just better if I don't eat a lot.

Usually I do eat dinner. Because I never have breakfast and I don't have lunch half the time so dinner is usually my sole meal. But normally my mind is calm enough to let me eat but I can't now because it's too loud and too much and I'll just feel nauseous and that's too much.

"You okay, Pete?" Tony's voice was gentle, but it still startled me.

"Yeah, yeah I'm fine, I'm okay," I guess I'm trying to convince myself more than him. But I should be okay. I'll be okay. I think so. I'm supposed to be fine. No, I'm supposed to be good. But good is a lot to ask for but okay is fine. I'm fine. I'm fine.

*Is being okay too much to ask for?*

I really wanted tonight to go well. But it's already falling apart and I'm not even there yet. It's supposed to be fun and relaxing and good. But it's just freaking me out more.

*Why can't I just be happy?*

...

"Did he leave already?" Tony didn't even see Happy walk in before he spoke.

"Yeah, Steve and Bucky just took him." Tony was collapsed on the couch, not bothering to sit up to greet Happy.

"You sound a little bitter," he noted, still standing.

"I am not *bitter*," he defended, "I just have a lot to do."

"For custody?" He asked.

After a sigh he admitted, "Yeah. I have more evidence than I thought but...it's just hard going through all of that."

Happy sat next to his friend, "that makes sense. It's really hard to relive it. But you don't have to do it alone."

To that, Happy was just met with silence. It is not often that The Tony Stark can not come up with a response.

I really want today to be a good day. I've been looking forward to today for a while but now I'm just terrified. I have no idea what I'm doing. I just want today to be a good day but I feel like it won't be. I know this is really stupid but I'm really trying not to freak out. I spent the whole bus ride this morning listening to very loud emotional music because that reflects how I'm doing inside at this moment.

I'm sorry this chapter is so short and bad but that's all I got for right now. Hopefully I can get a better chapter out soon.

## to stop having those days

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Do you ever just have one of those days? One where nothing really goes wrong, maybe even some stuff goes right, but you still feel horrible? You're mind is too loud and nothing is right. The snake is trying to murder you, it's too tight, *too tight*. There's no reason for you to feel this way. It isn't logical, it doesn't make sense, but that's just how you feel. And it's hard to explain because you should have a reason, you should, but you just don't. How can anyone help you when there's no reason for you to not be okay? Yeah...it's one of those days.

Part of me wonders if it's okay for me to blame anxiety and depression for making what would have been okay days horrible. I don't know if that's right. There has to be a point in which blaming my mental health just isn't right and I don't know where that line is

It's just one of those days. And it *sucks*.

I don't understand it. It doesn't make sense. I should be okay, I should be *happy*. But I'm just not. I want to be, but I don't know if I can.

But it's real. It's real. I'm real. I'm real. Right? I'm real. I'm alive. I'm valid. *I think...*

I mean I have to be real. I feel. Mostly. And I have to be real to feel so I must be real. *When I can't feel does that make me not real?* No. No that doesn't make sense. But since when do I make sense? I'm illogical and everyone struggles to understand me and how I feel because it doesn't make sense.

...

It was a quaint little diner that they took me to. It was quiet and had a calming atmosphere. It looked like it had been around since the 40's. Maybe it had, I wouldn't be surprised.

They already had their orders memorized, *how many times have they been here?* And they ordered food for me too, assuring me it would be the best sandwich I've ever had.

And we sat down.

## Chapter End Notes

Something has to change. Because my life...this all just isn't okay. Every good day I have is always followed by several horrible ones. Friday went better than I thought it would. But yesterday...I had a really bad panic attack last night. I was hyperventilating and sobbing and it felt like I would die. Thankfully a couple really amazing friends helped me through it. But I can't just live every day just hoping I won't have another panic attack. I can't keep doing this. I know I keep saying that but something really needs to change. I need to change something because this isn't a way to really live. I can't keep hoping for one day life will be better because maybe it won't. It's not like I haven't been trying to get better. I've been trying and trying and it's just not working. I'm not sure what I need to change but I have to do something. I shouldn't just watch everything fall apart and just say maybe it'll put itself back together because it won't. Not for me at least.

This story is good though. Not that it's well written or that it is a good story, but that it's good for me. It's for me first, it's to help me vent, it's for you guys second. That's how it's supposed to be I think. I'm not sure what to do but I need to figure it out. I'm not sure what I'm supposed to do. If I'm supposed to just focus on myself and work through it, if I'm supposed to try to get help from others, or a mix. But there has to be something I can do to help myself get better. And yeah I know some things have improved, I can't count that out.

But a lot of stuff has gotten worse and that isn't okay. I know there are always bad days, but I want more good days. It sounds stupid but that's just how it is. I don't even know if this makes sense. I'm not sure if anything really will change but this is just so stupid that so so much stuff keeps going wrong. And I know not all of it is my fault, but a lot of it is and I can't pretend it isn't.

Maybe going to people is just a temporary solution to bigger problems. I mean, it has to be, right? My friends, they aren't professionals, they aren't saviors, they don't know all the answers and I can't pretend they are what they aren't. But pushing everyone away hurts me so so much. I need to learn how to talk to people. How to not dump my issues on everyone and wonder why they leave. I don't want to keep hurting but hurting them is so much worse. Not everyone has left, that is true, but I can't keep going on like this. I've said that a lot but I haven't changed anything. Maybe it was better before, when I didn't really talk to people I just wrote everything down. Those writings can actually help people, and it lets me release without putting the weight on everyone. It was hard, but I did it and I can do that again. I don't think I would just stop talking to people but talking doesn't help them and it's supposed to be a two way street, a balanced relationship. Writing helps.

For the chapter, yesterday started as one of those days.

I felt so out of place, so off when nothing had really gone wrong yet. Then everything went wrong and I had the panic attack. But there were people there for me. There were. And that was one thing that did go right and that matters.

I don't know if I'll ever truly be better. But I know it can improve.

I'm not even sure if that whole thing made sense.

.

I'll try to get a real chapter out soon.

## to deal with the past

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Though the diner was empty of other customers, I would have thought the owners would have said *something* about two super soldiers in their restaurant. Though it was clearly family owned it's still not really a normal thing, I would think.

The food came out quicker than I thought it would, but I guess it answered my unasked questions when Steve thanked the waitress by name. She wasn't wearing a name tag so I guess they must come here a lot.

Once they started to eat I took a bite of what they insisted 'the best sandwich in the city'. Okay, I have to admit it's good. But I don't know how much of it I'll be able to eat.

It was relative silence while we all had our sandwiches. It was kind of nice.

I could only get through half and I guess Bucky could tell I was done because he whispered "it's okay if you can't finish." *Maybe it could be okay.*

"So, was that the best sandwich ever?" Steve asked, smiling big and real.

"Uh, yeah it was," I tried to smile.

"It's okay if it wasn't, Peter," Steve still smiled even though I know he must be dissatisfied.

"No, no it was!" I tried to assure them. It was good, it was, I just can't eat that much. It's not their fault that I'm the way I am.

They just let out a laugh. It's so casual with them, so calm, so comfortable.

I didn't miss how close Bucky and Steve sat next to each other, but they didn't hide that they were holding hands. It was nice to see them so comfortable, no stress, no agitation. *I can't let myself ruin*



*it. They are so happy. I'll only mess it up...*

“Hey, Peter?” Bucky got my attention. I didn't mean to zone out.

When I looked up at him he continued, “this can go however you want.” Before I could ask what he meant, he kept talking, “if you want to talk then we'll listen for as long as you need. If you want just a casual night then we can just relax and have fun.”

“There's no pressure,” Steve added on.

*But I don't know what I want.*

As if he could read my thoughts Bucky assured me, “it's okay if you don't know, we can just enjoy the night and if you want to talk then you can talk.”

*He makes it sound so easy. It's easy to talk about the stupid stuff, I can ramble on and on about the 'geeky' stuff, but anything real is just too much. I don't want to be too much...*

...

“Tony?”

“Pep, what are you doing here?” He quickly stood up as she walked towards him.

“Happy called, he said you needed some support,” as he started to protest she stopped him, “needing help doesn't make you weak, Tony.”

“Happy is just making a big deal out of nothing,” he turned back to his work, only for his fiancé to turn him back around.

“What is going on? We are in this together,” she put her hands on his shoulders, looking him straight in the eye.

He huffed out a breath, knowing better than to continue arguing with her, “I have recordings proving what May has done to Peter, but I don’t know what I can use unless I actually watch them.”

Pepper sucked in a breath, knowing what that means for Tony to have to go through everything again. “Friday, call Happy and Rhodey. We are doing this together,” she left no room for argument and he didn’t even try to fight her on it.

It wasn’t long before the reinforcements came and they all mentally prepared themselves for what they were about to watch.

Tony knew he needed to just get the day of the attempt over with, if he didn’t, he may never.

He had Friday project the recordings from their watch in the middle of the room as the four of them sat and watched. There really is no way to truly be prepared for something like this.

Before they could really see anything, they could hear the screaming, the banging of a door. The cameras movement was rapid, they could only assume that was because Tony was breaking into the apartment when the video began. Then they could hear Tony in the recording screaming at May. She screamed louder.

Happy joined in and it was them against May.

Pepper grabbed Tony’s hand the second she heard his breath catch in his throat next to her. Even as he desperately tried to keep his breaths even it didn’t work. But he didn’t stop the video.

*“You can’t just take him again!”* May in the recording screeched at him as he tried to push past her. Tony’s other hand was clenching and unclenching as he watched himself try to get to his kid.

*“He needs help!”* He had yelled back. Tony was now breathing through his mouth in an effort to keep the oxygen going in.

There was more yelling back and forth between the two before the Tony in the video finally got to the door. It took too long for him to reach Peter. Though it was clearly killing Tony to watch the

recording, he couldn't pull his eyes away.

Tony didn't see the tears in Peppers eyes as she watched what happened. She knew the general events of that day, but this, this was on a whole other level.

Happy was the only one who didn't directly watch the video, he was watching everyone else's reactions. He already lived it once, he didn't need to watch it again, listening to it again was already almost too much.

*"You'll never be his dad."* Hearing that again was enough for Tony to stop breathing for a moment. It's not like he could ever forget that May said that to him, but actually hearing it a second time...

"Pause it, Friday," Pepper called out. "Tony, hey, Tony," her voice softened, "Peter is safe. He is safe and soon he will be officially your son. He's been calling you Dad for a while now, because you really are his dad. He is *not* going back to her, he is safe."

He couldn't get out any words past his labored breathing, but she kept talking, pulling him into a comforting hug, "he is improving. It's slow, but it's happening. And that's what matters. She can't get to him anymore. You are already his Dad, it'll just be legal now."

"Tones, you got him out of there. You brought him to a real home, and he's safe now," Rhodey spoke with a softness he rarely displays.

"We have so much farther to go, though. He's still hurting so much," Tony was able to finally get out.

"And that's okay. Progress takes time. What matters is he's here and he's safe," it only showed her pure strength that even with tears in her eyes she could still hold steady.

"We don't have to continue now, we can take a break. This already is a *lot* of proof," Rhodes reasoned.

But Tony just shook his head, "no, I have to get through it."

“Okay,” Pepper ran her fingers through his hair, “we’re with you.”

...

After the diner we decided to go for a walk through the park before driving back to the compound.

Part of me knows that I should take the opportunity to talk to them, but they’re doing so well and I shouldn’t ruin that.

“Bucky?” I have no idea why I would possibly try to talk now, *what is wrong with me?*

“Yeah?” *I need to stop before I say anything stupid it’s not the time.*

*But I really should talk to someone...about anything really, there's so much I haven't said.*

“I never told Tony about Homecoming.” *Why is that what came out? Bucky and Steve weren’t even there, it doesn't matter to them.*

*But it still matters to me...*

“Do you want to tell him?” Steve asked. The three of us kept walking, it’s easier to talk when we don’t have to look each other in the eye.

“I’m scared to. I know it was a little while ago but I still think about it.” *About the building. About how stupid I was. How I knew no one would come. That all I wanted was Tony to come and save me, but he didn’t.*

“It’s okay to think about it. There’s stuff that happened several years ago that I still think about,” when Bucky said that Steve held his hand tighter.

“I was trapped,” *I should stop talking. I should. I need to. But I don’t want to...*

“I understand that,” Bucky agreed. But I don’t think he understands what I mean.

“I was actually trapped. The building-it came down on me and I know it was my fault but-” that’s when both of them came to a stop and faced me.

“Did you just say a building?” Steve asked, complete horror etched on his face.

“Peter, did a building collapse on you?” Bucky’s voice was even but I could tell that inside he was anything but calm.

“I-I mean...” *I messed up, they’re angry, I shouldn’t have said anything, I didn’t tell Mr. Stark for a reason,* “Yeah it did fall on me, but it was my fault.”

That did *not* help my cause.

“What do you mean your fault?” Bucky was desperately trying to stay calm.

“I should have known what he was doing, it was so obvious but I was too stupid to see that he was knocking down the support beams on purpose,” Before I could really explain they kept asking questions. *Too many questions.*

“Wait who knocked down the beams?”

“Okay, Peter, you’re not stupid. But why would he knock the building down on you? When was this?”

“It’s okay!” I really just need to end this conversation I’m ruining everything.

“It’s not okay, Peter,” I’ve never seen Bucky so deadly serious.

“It was a little while ago. It was the Vulture, I was trying to stop him from stealing from Tony and to try to stop me he collapsed a building on me. I got out though, and I stopped him,” I tried to fix this whole mess but I don’t think I can.

They exchanged a look but didn't say anything for a moment, which only caused my chest to tighten more.

When Bucky finally did speak it was not what I expected, "Can I give you a hug?" I sputtered out a yeah and he pulled me into a tight hug, but it didn't hurt. It felt *safe*.

"What he did was not okay. But it's not your fault, you're a kid. You did more than what anyone should expect of you," I just relished in the comfort.

After a few minutes I realized he wouldn't let go unless I did first. After a few more seconds of safe comfort I made myself let go.

"Do you want to head home now?" Steve asked me. I nodded.

"Will you tell Tony?" I asked as we started walking back towards the car.

Bucky let out a sigh, "that's something that should come from you. I'm not going to make you, but if it's something that important it should be talked about."

*That makes sense. But that doesn't make it any less scary.*

...

It was when the recording showed Tony desperately flying after Peter that it seemed like everyone in the room stopped breathing. They all knew what was about to happen. No one could take their eyes away from the projection.

Tony's breathing matched the borderline hyperventilation as the Tony in the recording. They could hear every labored breath, every word he begged to himself, every plea for Peter to please live.

They watched Peter on the bridge. And even though they all knew what was about to happen, none of them were prepared.

## Chapter End Notes

Well y'all I finally got a real chapter out. I didn't go to school today, I just really needed to be able to actually rest and recover. Two days ago sucked, and yesterday was not nearly as restful as I needed. I did wake up with a migraine and it still really hurts but it's kind of a relief because since I have a migraine my mom let me stay home.

And I'm not really sorry if my minor Stucky is annoying but I ship it and I want some happiness in this story.

## to force myself to be happy

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The drive back to the compound was actually pretty casual given the circumstances. Bucky had somehow found the one radio station that played music from back in their days. I know they were probably trying to make the drive more of a lighter experience, but I really didn't mind.

They knew I didn't really want to talk anymore, but they still left their conversations open for my opinion. It was nice to see them just joking around and having fun. I'm so used to just thinking of them as Captain America and Sergeant Barnes.

But this, *this* is Steve and Bucky. Not two soldiers, not two superheroes, but two guys in love. Maybe it's better like this, they're *happy*.

...

None of them made a sound as they watched the recording. Their silence only made it more tense as they could hear every ragged breath, every swear, every prayer that came from the video. Though the thrusters were loud, that didn't mask the sound of the *crack* Peter's body made once he hit the water. It's a sound that would haunt them all forever.

Pepper held Tony's hand even tighter when he flinched at the sound, but she didn't take her eyes away from the projection. It all happened so fast, but it felt so so slow, watching Tony dive into the water and pull his kid out.

Pepper had to choke back a sob when she saw how still the kid had been, no attempt to swim, no attempt to live. None of them had ever seen a suit fly as quickly as it had that day.

Though they all knew Peter is alive and well, a heartbreaking worry still filled all their expressions. It took way too long for them to get to the medbay. Tony flinched again when he heard himself break into his own medbay. The sound of breaking is just too familiar.

*"Help! Help! He needs help!"* They heard Tony plead, screams ripping from his throat. Tony Stark isn't supposed to beg. Tony Stark isn't supposed to plead. To be desperate. But he had lost every ounce of that patented Tony Stark confidence the second Peter jumped out the window.



“Friday stop the video,” Rhodey ordered, but his voice came out as more of a whisper. For a moment all they did was breathe, taking in what they just watched. And for Tony, what he just relived.

“Boss-” Friday began to announce, before Tony could yell at her to shut up she quickly finished her sentence, “Master Parker is on his way back upstate. He will be here in approximately 42 minutes.”

They all knew he was alive, but actually hearing that Peter would actually physically be there with him caused everyone to let out a sigh of relief.

It took every bit of energy for Tony to not break down. It’s miraculous that he didn’t have an attack while the video played.

“He’s alive, Tony,” Pepper reminded him once again, though her voice was shaky, “he’s safe.”

But they all knew Tony really wouldn’t be okay until Peter was home.

...

*I’m depending on people now more than ever. I used to be able to do this on my own. I mean, I didn’t do it well but I did it. Now it terrifies me when I can’t talk to anyone, I’m terrified to be alone for even a moment. I used to be alone all the time. I know what I’m missing now. But I should be able to do this on my own. Does that mean I’m getting weaker?*

We got back to the compound, and even though it wasn’t very late I still was struggling to keep my eyes open. I guess not sleeping much at night is catching up to me.

When we walked in, not only was Tony there to greet us, but Happy, Rhodey, and Pepper. It shouldn’t, but that made my chest tighten more with such dread.

“Hey kid,” and when he got up I guess I could just tell he wanted a hug and so I did. He held on so tight, it didn’t hurt, it was secure. It was at least a full minute before he let go.

*What happened while we were gone? He only does that when I have a panic attack? I mean it was really nice but why?*

“How was it?” He asked, a smile on his face. Though it did reach his eyes there was still a lot of pain behind them. When I glanced over at Pepper I couldn't help but notice how red her eyes were.

*Did I cause that? I mean, he offered for me to go with them but now they are all here and they're upset. I don't think I did anything? I probably did and didn't notice, but how can I try to fix it if I don't know what happened.*

I guess Steve and Bucky noticed the same things as I did, because the next thing I knew the two of them were leaving the room with Rhodey and Happy. They're gonna talk, I know they are, but what about?

“It was..good. Is something going on?” I couldn't help but ask.

His smile only wilted a little bit before he responded, “we were just going through some work.”

“Is it about me?” When I asked that, my voice probably too quiet, that was when he really faltered.

“What? Pete, no. You didn't do anything. What we were going through just brought back some memories, that's all. We are just glad you're back.” *I shouldn't doubt him. I should just believe he's telling the truth, he's never lied to me before. But with how they are acting it seems like it was about me.*

*But I also need to try to be happy. If I just make myself believe him then I can be happy.*

“Okay, are you alright now?” He wasn't expecting that. Though the snake is still tight, Tony is here and so everything will be okay. It will. It will all be okay.

“Yeah, Yeah kid I am,” and *that* was genuine. I even smiled. I want him to be okay. I need him to be okay, because he is a person that *deserves* to be happy.

## Chapter End Notes

Happy Valentines Day!!

So this weekend I'm gonna be on a retreat with my youth group so I probably won't be able to update until some time next week. I'm excited for the retreat but also nervous. I'm not as close with the other kids in the group as they are with each other, I'm only close with like 3 out of the like 27 kids. But those three are very very close to each other too so I still get left out. My brother will be there but he's a leader and he'll be with either the other leaders or the boys. Also, last year just about everything went wrong and it was stressful. No one could find their bags, the pipes froze and so we didn't have any water, there was a mouse in our cabin, a girl got a cut so bad she had to go to the hospital for stitches, and a boy got a concussion. And that was just in our group, there's a lot of other groups there too but we don't interact with them much. It'll be fun probably, but I'm still nervous.

## to break the cycle

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

I don't know what to say. I don't know what to do. I don't even know if being happy is possible, at least not for a while. Sometimes I get happy moments but I don't think a happy life will really happen.

I'm supposed to just push through. To just keep fighting. But it sounds like that implies that I'm not putting my all in to fight through or that I'm not already pushing so so hard.

I just wanted to be happy. To be able to relish in the good days, even just the good moments. To be satisfied with those few happy moments. I thought that maybe things could change, that I could be okay. I let myself think I could be okay.

Maybe if I was actually different, or in a different situation, if I was someone else I could be happy.

No one can take away that I did have a good time at the diner. But it's easy for all the negatives to overpower that one positive. One good moment doesn't erase all the bad days. I wish it could.

I bet it bothers people that I'm not better. I bet it's annoying. Excessive. Illogical. But as much as I'm trying, I'm not changing. Even if no one sees it, I am trying. *So hard*. I want to be better. I didn't used to, but I want to now. I want to be happy and to live life to the fullest.

*How much is too much? How long before everyone gets tired of this, of me?*

Shorter than I can prepare myself for, shorter than I want. But I know that no one has any obligation to me. Not even Tony, at least not yet. I not his kid, I probably never will be. I thought May had obligation to me, but she's not my mom. She didn't ask to raise me. She didn't ask for me. I never should have expected so much from her. That's too much weight to put on someone. I didn't know better before but I know better now.

I know better than to tell the truth, than to speak, than to hope, than to expect anything more.

But there is a possibility I could be happy one day. One day I'll live on my own, and I won't

pretend anyone has any obligation to me. One day I'll be out of school and I won't have to pretend to be okay. One day I'll be away from everyone and I won't hurt them anymore. One day I'll buy the groceries for myself and I'll be able to decide for myself if I really need food. One day I'll be by myself and I can cry as loud as I want because there won't be anyone to hear me.

I don't know if that's hope, but maybe it's a reason to hold on. That one day I'll be able to make my own choices. There won't be anyone to bang on the door, force me to talk, make me eat, guilt me out of feeling.

*But I don't want to be alone. I want someone to care. I want someone to encourage me. To care whether I get up in the morning or not. To care if I slept or not. To help me because they just care. But no one will ever stay that long.*

The only people who stay a while are those who I pretend the most with. If I'm 'happy' there's less weight on them, if I'm 'just tired' they aren't burdened as much.

I'm just going in circles. I have a high and then a low too much to take. I think I can be better but everything just proves to me I'm not. I think maybe I could be happy but I'm just reminded all the reasons why I can't. Will I ever be out of this cycle?

...

"Did you send the recordings to your lawyers?" Happy asked his friend. Peter was in his room so they didn't have to worry about him overhearing.

"I did. They're going through them themselves now," Tony answered, not looking at Happy.

Though neither of them ever said it, they could both see their relationship growing closer through all this.

"What did you send?" He spoke carefully. He had to be sure he wouldn't set the Stark into another panic by bringing it up.

Tony let out a small sigh as he answered, "everything from the day he jumped. Him saying he wants to stay here. Every conversation I've had with May through all of this. His panic attacks."

“That’s a lot of evidence. That should really help,” Tony knew Happy was trying to help him but the effects of watching those videos was still very present.

“It better help.”

Though Tony didn’t admit it, and tried not to show it, he was still scared. Scared that the evidence wouldn’t be enough, that Peter would have to testify, that Peter would find out and be betrayed that Tony sent some lawyers videos of Peter at his most vulnerable.

Before Happy could come up with a response a different voice cut in, “Tony, can I talk to you?”

It was clear that both men were surprised to see Sam approaching Tony for once. It only caused the worry in Tony’s face to deepen.

“Of course,” he breathed out. Happy took the cue and left the two other men to talk.

“I really think Peter needs to keep doing therapy. If not with me, I have connections, I will help find him someone else. But he still very much needs to talk to a professional,” there was no beating around the bush.

“Do you think he’s making progress?” Tony asked genuinely.

“He is. It’s slow, but it’s there. And I want to help make sure he keeps making progress,” he answered honestly.

“I’ll talk to him,” he decided.

## Chapter End Notes

Now I realize nothing will change. The weekend was a lot better than I thought it would be. Though I had three good days in a row, which is more than I’ve had in a long long time, I’m still the same person. I can’t undermine how wonderful it is to actually have some good days but I actually thought that meant anything would

change. I was actually happy. But then I came home, I even mentally prepared myself to see my parents knowing it would be really hard, but it still wasn't enough. My parents aren't going to change. No matter what I do, even if I do try to change, they won't. They'll still never believe me. If my dad can't even believe me about being sick to the point of throwing up or having so much physical pain I'm gonna cry, when he just tells me to "push through" whenever I'm sick or hurt there's no way he will ever be able to understand an illness he can't see. Pain that he can't comprehend. Because it's not logical it just exists anyway. It's not like I want my mind to be so loud, to have panic attacks, to be like this. And I'm trying to hard to be better but it's so hard. It feels like I'll never really be better. But my dad just keeps telling me to 'keep fighting and push through'. As if I don't fight every every day to even do the simple things. I don't want it to be hard to eat, or to fall asleep, or to get up in the morning, but it is.

Before I left for the trip I was really worrying about something that had just went down. Once again I found myself in a situation that I just couldn't handle. History has a way to repeat itself. But this time, this time I actually listened to the signs, I knew something was off and I actually said something. I knew what they were saying wasn't okay and I actually did something. I told a couple of my friends and they helped me out of it. I knew I couldn't do it alone, I still would probably be in that first situation if a friend hadn't gotten me out of it. This time wasn't as bad, I know the two of them are not the same people, but they said a lot of the same things. They said the same things, and it isn't okay, and they had a lot of the same signs. I was scared in both situations on what they would do, how I could get out of it. But I knew I wouldn't get out of it unless I actually said something. And I did I think. I hope.

It's one thing to support and listen, I can do that. But I'm not his savior. I'm not anyone's savior. I can't do that. I'm not that. I can only fail. I'm not even sure if I'm my own savior. It would be different if I was I a good mental place, or even an okay one, but I'm not. I'm not. I can't even handle my own weight I can't take anyone else's. I know it's selfish but I'm trying to protect myself. I can't take it. I can't do this again. It's so much like the first time. So much. I can't do that again. I don't want to be scared again. He says he needs me, that he doesn't want me to go, but I can't do this. I know I do this to others, I say I don't want them to go, but I try to make sure everyone knows they have the right to leave me. That they need to do what's best for them. I try to. Because I've been on the other side. And I can't handle being that again. I am not anymore than what I am and they want so much more from me.

I hoped I would be free this time. I thought after the first one that I wouldn't have to deal with that weight and pressure suffocating me, but I was wrong. I thought maybe this time...maybe this time I'd be right. And the weekend actually really helped. It was very powerful. I didn't even worry about it much. And I thought that if I could get through that stuff maybe I could be doing better. But in the end I still come home terrified to see my parents, I still say too much I know better than to tell them anything, I still end up crying in the bathroom. It's like I never left. But now I know that I could be happy, just not here, not now, not with them.

I realize this story is just running in circles, but I don't know how to not do that. I want this to be good but I don't know how.

## to take masks off

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Sometimes I wonder if I'm really here. I know that can only really make sense if you have felt that yourself, but it's a real feeling. Not feeling real is real. Usually it's with dissociation, but sometimes it's with that middle ground. And sometimes it's with the emptiness. The emptiness can feel a lot like numbness or dissociation but it's different. It's different than the middle ground because with the middle ground I see the emotions and the panic inside me, but with this, with this it's not like I don't feel, it's like I don't have any emotions at all. Like there is nothing in me that could feel, that I'm just a hollowed out shell.

Whatever I'm going through, the full force of my emotions, dissociation, panic attacks, numbness, emptiness, the middle ground, it always feels like the worst one when it happens. But I don't know if there is a worst one. There are actually positives to all of them, maybe not healthy positives but positives nonetheless. But there's so *so* many negatives.

I guess it just depends on the day and what I want in that moment, what I need. But that's confusing because it changes, sometimes what I need is different between each day and that's hard to understand. I get confused too.

Some days...all I want to do is cry. Just let it all out. Let myself *break*.

*But then I feel so weak.*

Some days...all I want to do is float away and not come back.

*But then I can't come back.*

Some days...all I want to do is panic on my own, feel on my own.

*But then I can't get out.*

Some days...all I want to do is not feel anything at all, no emotions, no pain, no anything.



*But then I can't release anything.*

Some days...all I want to do is know that I have emotions and that they are there but not actually feel them.

*But then the emotions won't come when I want them.*

Some days...all I want to do is be nothing, feel nothing, have nothing, be invisible to everyone.

*But then I still want people to stay, to see me, to be here.*

Any way you put it, I can never win.

...

It took a bit of time for Tony to know how to approach Peter. He knew he had to make sure whatever he said did not come off as he thinks Peter is crazy, is too much to handle, is getting worse, or anything of that sort.

"Hey, Pete?" He caught the boy's attention as they were building Legos together. He knew that Legos helped calm him and he wanted him as calm as possible.

"Yeah?" Though he tried to hide his sudden fear, Tony could see right through it. He's gotten good at seeing through his kids masks.

"What do you think about talking with Sam again. It could be like last time if you want, where it's just casual. Or we can see about you meeting a different person to talk to, if that would make you more comfortable," after dropping all that on him all of a sudden, he gave him some time to process.

"I don't know," was all he mumbled, his eyes cast down as he was still lost in thought.

“It’s okay to not know right now,” he assured him, “but it is something I think you should think about.”

But that was when the kid asked a question that even genius Tony Stark was not expecting, “What would you do?” But quickly realizing how blunt and rude it seemed he added on, “if I may ask?”

“Oh,” Tony let out a breath, quickly trying to come up with an answer. “Well either way would work, there’s positives to both. Talking to Sam is good because we know and trust him, and he knows what it’s like to be a superhero. But talking to someone new is also good because as a stranger they have no opinion of you already, you can say whatever you want. But the important part is that they are both professionals.”

“That makes sense,” Peter agreed, still pondering an answer of his own.

“I’m glad it does,” he smiled at his kid. He would do anything to make sure his kid is healthy.

## Chapter End Notes

Well I am utterly exhausted. It’s been a rollercoaster of emotions but I’m still trying.  
And that’s what matters I think.

I’ve had these same lines from the song Good For You from Dear Evan Hansen stuck in my head for weeks. I wish I was able to put everything into words like the writers of that musical were able to.

“All I need is some time to think

But the boat is about to sink

Can't erase what I wrote in ink

Tell me how could you change the story?

All the words that I can't take back

Like a train coming off the track

'Cause the rails and my bones all crack

I've got to find a way to

Stop it, stop it! Just let me off!”

If I could write like that maybe things would make more sense.

## to apologize

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

I'm sorry I ruin everything around me.

*I don't try to. But it still happens. It always happens.*

I'm sorry I just can't get better.

*I don't think I can get better.*

I'm sorry I hurt everyone.

*No matter what I do everyone always ends up hurt. I was smarter before, not talking is the only way to protect everyone. Yes, it hurts me. But if the choice is between hurting me and hurting everyone around me, then there really isn't a choice.*

I'm sorry I'm so selfish.

*I need to stop. It's wrong and I know it's wrong and I need to stop.*

I'm sorry I keep making all the wrong decisions.

*I'm trying so hard to do what's right, to make the right decisions, but I just can't. No matter what I do, it's always wrong.*

I'm sorry I keep talking.

*Being silent is better. You can't say too much if you say nothing at all. I always say too much. It was better before, when I never talked, because no one got hurt. Except for me, but I'm always hurt. I don't think I'll ever not be hurt.*

I'm sorry I keep playing the victim.

*I make my own choices. I can't pretend my mind controls me. I can't pretend I'm not the monster that I am. I can't pretend that I don't deserve this. Deserve everything that happened. I'm the one that made all the wrong decisions, I put this on myself. I ruined my own life. And therefore that means I have to deserve it.*

I'm sorry I'm manipulative.

*But even just apologizing for it may be manipulative. Everything I say could be and maybe I know it on some level. I don't know how to stop. I need to stop.*

I'm sorry I cry so much.

*I'm weak. But I feel like I can't help it. But I just have to numb myself and then I'll be fine. I need to be fine.*

I'm sorry I'm so weak.

*I'm pathetic. I'll never be anything more. Yet I'm still too much.*

I'm sorry I'm too much.

*I need to become smaller. More invisible. Silent. As if I don't even exist at all. Maybe I don't...*

I'm sorry I'm here.

*If I was stronger maybe I wouldn't be here.*

I'm sorry I don't make sense.

*I don't think I can. Nothing ever makes sense. It's not logical. And it confuses me too.*

I'm sorry I haven't left yet.

*The only way to really be free is to just leave. Then everything will be on my terms. Then I can decide how and if I want to keep going. And it will only be my fault because I'll be alone.*

I'm sorry I thought I knew what I need.

*I was wrong. I don't know anything. May was right.*

I'm sorry I'm so needy.

*I hold on too tight. I put too much weight on everyone. I'm a burden.*

I'm sorry I have so much weight.

*I wish I didn't.*

I'm sorry I couldn't fix this.

*I don't think anyone can fix this. Fix me. Fix my life. Fix everything I've broken. I'm broken. Can broken people be fixed? Most can, I think. But I think I'm too shattered to even find all the pieces of who I used to be. I'll never be the same. I'll only be worse and worse.*

I'm so sorry...

*So so sorry.*

But sorry isn't enough. It doesn't fix it. I can't fix anything.

I wish I knew what to do. The best thing for everyone is for me to just leave. To just go. Go where no one can find me. Being isolated is better than burdening everyone. Being too little is better than being too much. At least for me.

But I don't think I'm strong enough to leave.

I'm weak. And I'm scared. I'm sorry I'm so scared. I need to just suck it up and push through. Just push through. It should be that easy. But I make everything so hard.

I put too much on everyone. I put too much pressure, too much weight, too much. I'm too much. I know no one can be my savior. I know no one has the responsibility to save my life. I know I'm no one's obligation. I know. So I need to stop. Because it is not fair for me to pretend it's okay. It's not okay for me to put that weight on anyone. It is my responsibility to save myself. It's my job to be my own savior. If I can't save myself then no one could save me.

But that's just a me thing I guess. It's my fault that I'm weak. I know some people can do it. They're strong. *What happened to me to make me so weak?*

I need to just man up. Suck it up and stop being so weak. I need to just push through. I'm supposed to push through.

I need to just hold it in. The nice thing about living with May was that I could just wait until she fell asleep and then I'd be able to cry myself to sleep. But I can't do that here. I just need to numb myself, then I'll be okay.

I want to be okay. I need to be okay. I'll be okay. I will. I will? Right? Yeah... I mean I'm supposed to be. But that doesn't mean I am... but I will be. Yeah...

I could talk to Tony. I could. But I know I shouldn't. It's not fair to put that pressure on him. It's not fair at all. He doesn't need my weight too.

But if he didn't want me wouldn't he have gotten rid of me by now?

Unless he's more like me than I thought. That he too would stay in a bad situation. That he puts others before himself so much he would take everyone's weight even when he can't handle his own. That he would be too scared to leave because of the fear of what I would do without him here.

But he's not like me. He's so so much stronger. He's so much better than me.

*But he wanted me to be better.*

But I just can't. How can anyone be better than Tony? Not just because he's Iron Man or a billionaire or a genius, no behind all that is the hero he really is. There are a lot of enhanced people, there's plenty of billionaires, there are more geniuses, but not all of them are heroes. Tony is. Undoubtedly.

It's become my first instinct to go to him. I don't know if that's a good thing, it most likely isn't. It's selfish. I'm selfish. I should apologize to him for putting all this weight on him. But if I do that I'll just be bothering him again. No, silence. Silence is better. Silence is what's best.

*But I still want to go to him. Maybe not even to really talk but to just be with him. Maybe he would hug me. Maybe he'd stay with me even if I started crying. He's stayed through the most. He has every right to leave, but he hasn't. Is that just the hero in him? Maybe it could be because he really does want to be my dad.*

Maybe.

Hopefully.

## Chapter End Notes

Today was a hard day. Thing after thing kept going wrong. I even cried in the stupid school bathroom. Surprisingly that's the first time I've hidden in there to cry, but unsurprisingly that's not the first time I've cried at school. It sucked. It was actually stressful because I had to put so so much effort into staying silent because there were other girls in there and I couldn't risk them hearing me. But in order to be quiet it causes me to stop breathing, which I'm not really sure why that happens but it's not like I would really breathe anyway.

It also doesn't help that I'm sick. It was like five minutes before my dad was supposed to drive me to school and I threw up. And my parents still made me go to school

because I had to go to math class. I had to meet with my math teacher this morning, which always stresses me out, and then I had to wait until third period to be picked up. Because math is more important. My dad wanted me to push through but I just couldn't. Mentally or physically. I had my mini breakdown during first period, I couldn't even handle one period. But I know I'm incredibly lucky that my mom came and picked me up. I know I am. I really need to stop being so ungrateful. But yeah...last night was a mess, this morning was a mess, but thankfully I got to rest the rest of the day and paint a little. Physically I'm still not good and mentally I'm so so. But that's normal I guess.

I genuinely hope y'all have a good day. Thanks folks



## to know what to do

### Chapter Notes

Trigger warnings for panic attack and mentions of self harm and suicide

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

What do you do when your mind is screaming and you're too weak to drown out the noise? What do you do when there's no one else around to help muffle the never ceasing screams? What do you do when you're alone?

I know the noise won't ever stop but it's getting louder and louder and louder and *louder louder louder louder louder!*

It won't stop!

I can't even pretend to be okay. I know I'm just working myself up, that it's my fault. But I can't stop. My mind won't stop.

Every fear, every insecurity, every doubt stains every every part of my thoughts. Like ink on paper, it won't ever be stainless again. It won't *stop*.

What do you do when there's no one you can go to?

I want to go to Tony, the only possibly healthy instincts left are to go to him. But I don't want him to think that I only need and want him to help me through panic attacks.

Every sound, every single thing. The air vents, the doors opening and closing, the footsteps on the ground, it's all too much. It's too loud. I don't want loud.

The snake is so tight I don't think I'll ever be able to breathe fully again.

Somehow I can hear every single miniscule sound in this building but my mind is still screaming to

deafening decibels.

The only other instincts left are the unhealthy ones, but what other choice do I have?

I don't necessarily *want* to cut right now, but I need to. I need to feel something. I need physical evidence of the emotional suffering inside. I need a distraction from everything. I need to be able to *breathe* even if only for a moment

*I just want Tony though...*

But he's not coming. I'm alone. That's how I always ends up.

I...I just always find a way to mess up every relationship I ever get. No matter what everything always gets messed up and it's almost always my fault. I have to just accept that, right? That it's on me. Because I am the one messing up my own life. But I need to figure out how to stop. But I don't think I can.

*I don't want to be alone.*

What do you do when you know no one's coming? What do you do when you know no one will save you? What do you do when you know you can't save yourself?

*You die...*

A small part of my mind whispered, finally whispering for once, but it's never sounded louder.

Everything's falling apart. Everything. And I can't fix it. I can't put it back together. I can't even put myself back together.

*But Tony is a fixer.*

But he can't fix this. He can't. It's too much, too broken. Too shattered.

I can't let myself cry. And I can't go numb. I can't control dissociation. I don't feel empty. I think I'm here but I don't want to be.

If I cry then I won't stop. If I go numb then I can't let out all these stupid emotions. I want to dissociate but it won't come. I just don't feel empty. If I'm real, then reality sucks.

*I don't understand. I don't understand. Am I just stupid?*

It's surreal to watch yourself crack. But it's inevitable. Like you're standing in front of a train. You watch it coming and you know it'll hit you but actually being hit is just nothing you can ever really prepare yourself for. But it's like I can't ever stop getting hit. And somehow I haven't died yet.

What do you do when you know you can't be saved?

*I can't cry though. I can't. I can't. I can't I can't I can't I can't I can't.*

*I know he's not coming. I need to stop lying to myself, saying he'll come when I know he won't.*

He said he'd be right back. That he'll be back soon. That I'll be okay. That he'll be right back. That I won't be alone, that they're be people here with me.

*But I never wanted him to go in the first place.*

But I knew this would happen. And I was stupid enough to hope it wouldn't.

Stupid stupid stupid.

What do you do when your mind just won't stop?

What do you do when you know your mind is right? About everything?

## Chapter End Notes

I don't know what else to say...

## to fix myself

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

As tears slipped down my face, my voice choked up to the point where every breath *hurt*, the words “I’m sorry,” broke out.

I didn’t mean to cry. I really didn’t.

But Bucky is here now. Somewhere in between my ruthless thoughts screaming and my tears finally falling, Bucky came.

*It hurts, god it hurts so bad...*

*Will I ever be out of pain?*

I wish I was strong enough to put myself back together. I wish I was the hero of my own story. I wish this could be a story of the hero learning to fix themselves. But I’m just not in that place. I don’t know if I ever will be. I could hope I will be, that one day I’ll learn to put my broken pieces back together. But I don’t know if that will ever happen.

Tony was right, I guess, I’m not alone. It’s just, he’s not here.

Most people are only here for a chapter and that *has* to be okay.

But I hoped Tony would be here longer. But maybe, maybe it’s just not his chapter. Maybe he’ll be back soon.

The only person who really is here for the whole book, is yourself. No one else will be there, and that has to just be accepted.

I didn’t think anyone would come. No, I *knew* no one would come. But maybe I don’t know the right things. I really am trying to see reality.

“You have nothing to be sorry about,” Bucky told me as he hugged me. It’s the same way he held me that night he helped me through a nightmare. It’s nice.

*I have everything to be sorry about. Everything. I shouldn’t even be freaking out. He has his own issues, his health is supposed to be the priority not mine.*

“Yes I do,” I protested, weakly but still I tried.

“What do you have to be sorry about?” He asked, gently. And with the way he said it, he really did seem to want to know the answer.

“I’m sorry that I keep doing this to you, and to Tony, and Steve and Happy and Wanda. I’m sorry that I keep putting so much weight on everyone, that I’m such a burden. I’m sorry that I’m still here, it would be so much better if I wasn’t,” I knew I should stop, that I should just shut up and be silent, but the words refused to stop coming out, “I’m sorry that I’m so needy, that I can’t handle anything, that I cry so much. I’m sorry that I can’t get better, that I can’t just *fix myself*,” I would have kept going if I wasn’t cut off by a big sob. *I just can’t stop crying. I didn’t mean to cry.*

“Peter...” was all he said at first, and I stopped breathing for a moment, “we don’t expect you to be able to just ‘fix yourself’, okay?” At seeing my failing gasps for air he addressed that next, his voice still calm and low, “Hey, you feel my heartbeat? You feel my breathing? Can you try to breathe with me.”

I like that he doesn’t make me count my breaths, count how long I keep them in and out. Counting makes me panic more because when I can’t go that deep then I’m failing and I don’t want to keep failing.

It took longer than it should have, but I was eventually able to breathe somewhat normally. And then he continued, “you are not doing anything to us. We are here because *we* want to be. You are not forcing, guiltling us into, or manipulating us into being here. We are here because we *want* to help you.”

*But that can’t be true. There’s no reason why they would want to help me.*

He kept talking, and it was really calming, “you are not burdening any of us. No one is able to hold all weight, that’s why we share it.”

He let those words sink in for a few breaths before he continued, “I am so *so* happy you are here. No one, *no one*, would think it’s better without you. Not even for a second. You are not ‘needy’, you need help but that does *not* make you needy. And Peter? Peter you handle *so* much. You’ve been through more than anyone ever should, especially at your age. When I was your age, I never would have been able to go through what you have. There is no way I ever would have come out as kind, as caring, as genuinely heroic you are.”

*How could that be true?*

“You can get better. And you will. We are all with you, through whatever happens. It’s our choice and we want to. We wouldn’t still be here if we didn’t believe you will get better and want to help you get there.”

*I...I don’t have an argument against that.*

...

Tony *never* would have left if he didn’t know it was absolutely necessary. And it is.

He decided it would be best to deal with himself.

They decided to meet at a quiet little café. She refused to go anywhere private with him. As if he was the one that would try to hurt him.

At this point there was no facade, no fake pleasantries, just a cold “May,” when she finally arrived. She was seventeen minutes late. He stood up when she walked in, not to be polite but to hold as much dominance as he could muster.

“Stark,” her voice came out as more venomous than cold. “Where’s my kid?”

And *that* already pissed him off, “I didn’t bring him with me.”

Flames burned behind her eyes, she hadn't even bothered to sit down yet, "you can't hide behind your lawyers forever."

The only reason he was 'hiding' behind his lawyers is because his priority was to be there for Peter. She did call the cops on him, and thankfully his lawyers were somehow able to get them to back off for the time being. He didn't bother questioning how they managed that. All he cared about was making sure Peter was safe and happy.

"I'm doing what's best for Peter," he meant every word.

That's when the screaming started, "what's best for Peter?! You *kidnapped* him from me and you have the audacity to say you're doing what's *best*!?"

Though he kept his voice at a normal talking level, it did not keep any fire from his tone, "he *chose* to come with me. He *wants* to stay with me, May."

"He doesn't know what he wants! He's a child! He's my child and only I know what's best for him!" She refused to back down.

His voice became dangerously low, "you have no idea how to help him. You just made everything worse for him."

Her pure shock and anger was almost enough to throw him off, but not enough "I was keeping him safe!"

He could list every single example of how she destroyed his mental health, but he knew that wouldn't get them anywhere. It took every ounce of self-control but he tried to mend what he could, "I didn't come here to scream at each other," before she could protest he quickly continued, "I'm here to talk about custody."

For the next minute only profanities flooded out of May, and he took it all. He would take anything for his kid. "You kidnapped my kid now you want custody over him?!"

He didn't bother fighting her on the whole kidnapping thing again, "yes."



“You can’t have him!” She was beyond hysterical at this point.

“I have more evidence than you would think possible. I have the best lawyers in the country. And Peter *wants* me to have custody.” He knew there was no way she could beat that.

Instead she growled, “what evidence?”

“For starters, him saying he wants to stay with me, him jumping, his panic attacks-” she cut him off.

“He has panic attacks?” Instead of anger, there was just pure confusion.

“Yes,” he answered simply. He knew Peter would be upset if he found out that Tony revealed more to May without his knowledge.

That was when she sat down. He knew he had a long discussion ahead of him.

...

Bucky said he would stay as long as I needed and wanted him. And he did. He talked to me until I fell asleep, and stayed until I woke up. I didn’t have a nightmare. I actually slept restfully which was shocking given the mental state I had just been in.

But he stayed.

## Chapter End Notes

I’m sorry about the chapter yesterday. It was a lot. I was in a very very bad mindset and trying very hard but failing at fighting off a panic attack. I was gonna delete it, I still might, but I may be able to work with it. I mean, I write from my emotions, I’m venting, and that’s how I was yesterday.

I feel like Tony meeting with May is very late, and I’m sorry about that. I really do try to keep the plot going but it’s hard. I’m not good with plot already and then I have to balance being able to vent and being able to have a real story. If I don’t let out my emotions through my writing then it’s pointless and so I need to vent for my own

mental health, but then no one will read it if there's no real story behind it. So it's hard but I'm trying to figure it out.

Today was...well I'm not sure. I painted a lot which was really lovely and calming. But I also got some really really horrible news, the word horrible doesn't even describe it accurately. My cousin, a thirteen year old boy, is going to die. He has maybe six months. We've known his health has been dramatically decreasing, but this...this is so soon. And then I found out a family friend who we all knew would die within these next few months, but she could die anyway now. They think she has maybe a month. She is the grandmother I always wanted, she's always been here. Always. I don't want her to go. I don't want either of them to go. I love them both so so much. I know any time is too soon, but they both have so much life to live. They're young. My cousin is thirteen years old. Thirteen. No child should be dying.

## to stop being selfish

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“What else am I not aware of?” Was the first thing May asked after she sat down.

It took a lot of self control for Tony to not be snarky and say something along the lines of ‘oh, do you want to hear the whole list?’ But he bit his tongue.

“I’m not here to talk about that, I’m here to talk about his custody,” he responded with a straining calmness.

Though it was clear that she was seething inside she had the audacity to ask, “and what about it?”

“Look May, we both know that we need to do what’s best for Peter. This is about him. And he wants and has asked is to stay with me,” it again took immense self control to not have a smug smile at the end of his statement.

“We both?” She scoffed, “You know nothing about him, Stark.” Says *her* of all people.

And that is what got him to lose his calm mask, “*I’m* the one who has held him as he cried. *I’m* the one that sits with him until he falls asleep again after a nightmare. *I’m* the one that helps him breathe during a panic attack. *I’m* the one he went to after *you* hurt him. *I’m* the one that he wants to stay with.”

“I’m the one that raised him!” She shot back.

“And look who he chose,” his voice alone was deadly.

That was when the tears finally came into her eyes, “you can’t have him,” her voice cracking was almost enough to get him to back off a little.

But all he did was lower his voice more, “look May, we both know how this will turn out. It’ll be

easier on everyone if we stop fighting. Fighting doesn't help Peter."

She sniffed but didn't say anything.

"My lawyers will contact you about the papers," and he left with that, knowing she was not in a place to keep talking.

...

Tony came back.

I know he said he would, that he's not gonna really leave me, that he would be back soon. But I was scared. It would be so easy for him to just leave and never come back. It would be so easy for me to be alone again.

*But I will be alone again.*

I know it's in several months, but there are still nights that I stay up terrified of Tony and Peppers wedding. I'm excited of course, I'm so happy for them, so happy. They deserve it. They deserve to be happy together.

*But I'll be alone again.*

Tony had asked me to be a part of the wedding, and of course I accepted. The gesture is kind. Rhodey is the best man. I only know one groomsman, which is Happy, I have no idea who or if he has any other groomsmen. The only bridesmaid I know Pepper has so far is Natasha.

*I don't want to be alone again.*

Part of me wants to think that nothing will really change, but I know that's not true. Yeah I know Pepper already lives here so that will be the same, but it'll be really *real* now. More than ever their priority will be each other, and that's how it should be. It's not meant to be any other way. I'm lucky enough if I'm even an afterthought to Tony.

*But I don't want to be an afterthought. But that's selfish. I know it is. Why would Tony Stark think anything of me?*

As the wedding approaches, all their thoughts and energy will be on planning it. I know Pepper is ecstatic to finally pull her dream wedding together. She deserves it. She deserves to be happy and to find joy in the wedding planning.

*How will custody work with the wedding coming?*

*No, no that's selfish. The wedding is the priority. Tony and Pepper are the priority.*

There are times where I lock myself in the bathroom and just cry.

*Sometimes I wonder if it'll be like before, like when I was with May.*

I should be happy. I need to be happy for them. And I am. On some level. But on another level I am absolutely terrified. I'm terrified to lose him...

It really won't be the same after the wedding. But this is how it's supposed to be, I guess.

I'm even scared about the honeymoon, which is just stupid and I know it is. He'll come back, he will. I'll just have to be without him for some time. They are undecided on how long the honeymoon will be. I mean, I know I have Bucky and Steve, and maybe Happy, but they can't replace Tony. No one can.

*When you lose someone, you begin looking for them in everyone else, but you never find them.*

## Chapter End Notes

I'm sorry this chapter took forever to come out. It's been a crazy and exhausting week. But I also did start a second fanfic, it's for Dear Evan Hansen. It's gonna be a short

one, it's pretty much just me venting about that guy who manipulated me. I know I complain about him a lot and it's probably super annoying but I'm still hurting from that whole ordeal. When I post a chapter it's like I'm finally releasing, and since what happened with him is not really something that fits into the story of the fic I thought making a new one would help me heal better.

And I'm sorry if this chapter was bad, I'm experiencing a bit of writing block with this story so I figured channeling my fears for my brothers weddings will at least give me some emotion for the chapter. I do plan on doing some more with Tony's upcoming wedding in the story.

## to stop begging for what I know won't happen

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Sometimes I wonder if I *can* get better. That even if I put in all the effort I can muster, it won't change anything. I do believe there can be improvement, I've already seen some. But I don't know if I can ever fully be better. Is it possible to be happy and not be better?

Tony says I'll be better.

Bucky says that it just takes time.

Steve says that I will be happy.

But I just don't know.

I know I physically heard a voice, but it didn't register in my mind.

Should I just be satisfied that I have improvement? Or am I supposed to keep striving to be better? If I do that then I'll never be happy because I'll just keep wanting more and more and more. I need to just be happy with where I'm at, I guess. I don't know.

"Peter?"

Should I know? Am I supposed to have the answers? Even if I ask someone that doesn't mean they'll know either. So then what? I don't know. I just don't know.

Do you ever have those moments that you just realize that *that* is how fragile you are? Where everything is fine and then something happens and then I'm like oh yeah I'm not fine. I'm never fine.

"Peter!"

It's frustrating. So so frustrating because I'm *tired* of this. I'm sick of being like this. I know I should be better. Not every little thing should break me. I'm supposed to be doing better. I'm supposed to be better than this. But I'm not, *I'm just not*.

"Peter!"

I feel like I've already spent so much time trying to get better but I'm not getting anywhere. I know it just takes time, everything takes time, it'll be worth it in the end. But how long do I have to wait? Is it really just a matter of time or am I just not fighting hard enough? Is this my fault?

It could very well be my fault. Maybe I'm not trying hard enough, fighting hard enough. Maybe it is possible to be better but *I'm* just not enough to get there. I know other people can get it, but maybe it's just me that can't.

"Kid!"

I need to try to come back. I need to try not to float away. *But it's so nice to float off.*

"Underoos..."

It was the sound of crying that caught my attention. It's like I just pulled myself out of water. Everything so foggy and unclear, but now reality is here.

"Dad?" I asked. *How long has he been here? Am I in the common room? I floated away in the common room? That was so stupid I should have held on tighter, I know I can't really control my mind floating away but if I held on tighter maybe I wouldn't have scared Tony so much.*

At hearing my voice he quickly pulled me into a hug. I didn't mind that he didn't ask permission first, not this time, not with him. I like his hugs, they feel safe.

...

There is nothing more terrifying than not being able to help your kid.



Tony had just gone to the bathroom and came back to find Peter sitting completely still. It's like he was hardly breathing. Even when Tony moved in front of the kid, his eyes stared right through him. As if he wasn't even there.

Even saying his name didn't seem to register at all in him. The pure fear that struck him was enough to make his heart stop for a second. He kept saying his name, over and over, trying to pull his kid out of whatever was pulling him away.

He couldn't help it, he started crying. Because his kid was sitting directly in front of him, but it's like he wasn't there. Tony had read about dissociation before but he wasn't sure if this was it or not.

The crying, that was what seemed to bring Peter back, even if only a little bit. And the second his eyes focused and he called him 'Dad' he couldn't help but to pull the kid into a hug.

...

*I scared Tony. I'm not even sure what that was but either way it scared him. I didn't mean to scare him.*

*I floated away like with dissociation, but I still was able to think too too much like with a panic attack. It's happened before but I don't understand it. How can I explain something I don't understand?*

"Kid, you're back," I couldn't tell if it was a question or a statement with how he said it. I'm not sure.

"I'm sorry I scared you," I whispered. I sound so pathetic.

"Peter," he pulled back just enough to be able to look me in the eye, "I just want to make sure you're okay."

*Am I okay though? No matter what I do I still have panic attacks, I still dissociate. I still just can't get better. Is that okay?*

“I’m sorry,” I said again. And I meant it. I know I apologize a lot but I mean it every time. Because I keep screwing up, I keep hurting people, I keep scaring people, I can’t stop messing everything up. And so I’m sorry. To everyone.

## Chapter End Notes

Yeah I have no idea. I don’t know if this chapter even made any sense. I’ve been really out of it, and frankly I’ve not been in a good mindset. I’ve been trying to just be happy to just be okay to stop being like this but it’s not working. I had to say goodbye to my almost grandma. I don’t know what else there is to say about that. Right this second she is alive, but it’s any day now. They weren’t even sure if she’d live long enough for me to say goodbye. Thankfully she did. I didn’t actually say goodbye, I couldn’t. I just kept saying I love you. I don’t know what else there is to say. Hopefully soon I’ll be in a better mindset.

## a stranger

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

It would be so much easier if he was a stranger. It's a lot easier to talk to someone you don't know at all. Because then there's no pressure, no judgement. It doesn't matter what they think of you, it doesn't matter if you screw it up.

I like Sam, he's nice and patient. But he's an Avenger, and he lives in the Compound with us. It matters what he thinks. It matters if I screw up, if I say too much.

I know I'm supposed to talk to someone, I know Tony wants me to, but it's so hard. It's so hard to just show all my broken pieces and be like here, here's everything dark and wrong about me. I can't do that. I'm supposed to be better, stronger. But I'm not.

All day today our...meeting, I guess, has been at the back of my mind pestering me. *I'm so scared.*

I know I should just lay it all out, tell him what's really going on, but I don't know if I can do that.

Tony is happy that I'm seeing Sam, and I'm glad that he's happy, but I'm not happy. *But that's the point, isn't it?*

It started like before, Tony coming to see if I was ready, then him taking me to see Sam. It's supposed to be like last time, because that worked I guess, where it's just casual as to make me less uncomfortable.

"Hi Peter," Sam greeted me cheerfully.

"Hi," I managed to match his enthusiasm. In stuff like this, it's easier to put on that persona of happiness because then it seems more like I'm okay and I need to be okay.

"I'll leave you to it," and with that, Tony left. But I can call him if I need him. We just sat down on the couches. This room I guess is technically a common room but it's not used very often since it's not as big as the main one. But I also think Tony probably informed the others to stay away from here to give us privacy. I think he had us come here rather than a meeting room to try to make me

as comfortable as possible. It's a kind gesture.

"How are you doing?" Though it sounds like small talk I know he seriously wants to know.

"I'm okay," the words fell from my lips before I even thought about it. It's just so automatic.

"You don't need to say that if you're not okay," he told me calmly but seriously.

I nodded, not really knowing what to say. There's so much I *could* say but I don't know if I should. I could tell him about how my depression seems a bit better but my anxiety seems worse. I could tell him about my panic attacks or my dissociation. Or about how terrified I am to see May. How much I miss Wanda but I know I screwed it up and she hates me. How I really love spending time with Bucky but I'm scared that'll cause me to become less close with Tony. How utterly scared I am for the wedding.

There's so much I could say but I don't know how. I never know how.

"Would you like to say what you're thinking about?" He asked, gently. *No.*

"I don't know..." I mumbled, even though we both knew the answer.

*How am I supposed to just say everything? Or anything? How am I supposed to just blurt out everything wrong with me?*

"It's okay, Peter. We can just talk, it doesn't have to be heavy stuff right now," he tried to assure me.

*'Right now', but later it will. It will have to be and I can't do that. I can't. I don't know how.*

*The only thing I can maybe talk about is Wanda. I've accepted that. I've accepted that I ruined everything and she hates me now.*

"I miss Wanda," I whispered. And it's true. I miss her. I miss talking to her. But I burned that

bridge. She hates me. I think it was the café that I last saw her, and I had a panic attack. She saw how weak I am. She must hate me. I know she hates me.

“Have you talked to her?” He asked, but not pressed.

“No. She doesn’t want to talk to me. We haven’t talked in a long time and so much has happened but she doesn’t want to talk to me.” *I said too much, I know I did.*

“Why do you think she doesn’t want to talk to you?” It’s a valid question but for some reason it frustrated me.

“If she wanted to talk to me, wouldn’t she have?” *But then again, I want to talk to her but I haven’t. But I’m the one that ruined everything. I’m the one that messed it up, I don’t have the right to approach her and bother her.* “Are you going to tell her?” I asked.

“No, no whatever we talk about stays between us,” Sam assured me.

“Even from Tony?” I asked after a moment of thought.

“Yes. Even from Tony.”

## Chapter End Notes

I am supposed to finally tell my therapist all the stuff I haven’t told her, which is a lot. But I’m terrified.

On another note, I was wondering how many loose ends does this story still have? I know there’s definitely a lot like May, custody, the wedding, therapy, Wanda, school, the meds Helen was working on, Spider-Man, but what else is there? I want to make sure I’m not ignoring any big plot holes so if there’s something I haven’t covered or a question I haven’t answered please tell me. I want to be able to actually wrap this up one day but I need to know what I’m missing to be able to do that.

## to deal with fear

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

I feel like it shouldn't feel freeing to know Tony won't know what I say to Sam, that there are things I can keep between us. It's not like I'm necessarily keeping secrets, I just have some things I don't think he needs to hear about. No, no that sounds bad.

"What are you afraid of?" He asked, which I absolutely did not expect, but he continued, "You don't have to answer but it's something to think about. To see if you know."

*Being left. Being left with May again. That it really is my fault, all of it. That I really am the one that ruined my own life. That I'll drive everyone away. That I'll never get better. That I'll make the wrong decision and it'll ruin everything. That I'll relapse, and that I'll be happier if I do. That if I relapse, it won't help and I'll be trapped again but I won't get the satisfaction anymore. That I'll say too much and scare everyone away. That I'll never learn the balance between being too little and being too much. That everyone will give up on me. That I'm not valid. That maybe I was right originally, before. That it was good that I didn't swim, that if I was faster it would have been better. That Tony will hate me. That May was right. That I'm just overreacting and oversensitive. That I don't actually have any mental illnesses and I have no excuses and no reasons not to be happy. That my mind is right, about everything.*

*I'm so scared...*

After letting me think for a few moments, he spoke again, "Do you want to keep talking about Wanda?"

*I don't know. I know this is supposed to be for me but I don't know the answers. I don't know anything.*

I shrugged, still not having an answer. I should just talk to him. Open up. But that's a lot easier said than done. I know he's here to help. I know I am more lucky than I'll ever be able to understand to be able to see a therapist whenever I need to.

*I'm so ungrateful, I should take the opportunity I've been given and actually use it to help me. What right do I have to see a therapist if I don't let myself be helped?*

“How did it go talking to Tony about being Spider-Man?” *I forgot about that. So much has been going on that kind of fell off my priority list.*

“He said we can work something out. But neither of us really think it’ll be really good for me to do right now,” that’s true, it really wouldn’t help me.

“Do you have an idea of when you might want to try being Spider-Man again?” That’s a valid question but I still can’t come up with an answer.

“I-I don’t know. I’m just not ready yet.” *I can’t handle the responsibility. I can’t even handle the responsibility of trying to keep my mind okay, how can I do anything more?*

*Tony does though. He fights through and he’s still a hero. But I’m not as strong as him.*

...

“How did it go with May?” Pepper asked once Tony came back from dropping Peter off with Sam.

Tony let out a heavy sigh as he sat down. “We really didn’t *talk* much since she was mostly just yelling at me. In the end, I realized we really wouldn’t get much done and said my lawyers would contact her.”

“You expected that though, that she wouldn’t cooperate,” Pepper held his hand as she sat next to him.

He huffed out another breath, “yeah but I still hoped she would. She knows she can’t win and it would be easier on everyone if she just signed the papers.”

“It’s not going to be easy Tony. She probably sees this as fighting *for* Peter.”

“Fighting for Peter?” He snapped, “she’s fighting against him! She’s keeping him from being happy, being free. All she ever does is hurt him!”

“Tony...” Peppers voice was soft.

He leaned back, “I’m sorry Pep,” his voice just as soft, “I’m not mad at you. I’m mad at her.”

“I know, I know. It’s so hard to watch someone you love hurting,” they both knew she knew from experience. He was never very good at opening up to what is hurting inside.

...

“I can sense you’re holding back, Peter. But that’s one thing we are here to work on, I don’t expect you to just completely open up right away.

*I’m always holding back, aren’t I? The-the only times I’m not holding back is when...is when I’m having a panic attack...*

*Maybe I could talk about May? Maybe? What she did...it wasn’t okay. It wasn’t. But, but what if she was right?*

## Chapter End Notes

In all honesty I’m not sure how to write Sam reacting to all the May stuff. When I told my own therapist about my mom forcing me to take my clothes off to check my body for cuts, she said my mom was right. She supported it and said to keep doing it. Every week. I never felt safe. My body was not my own anymore.

And I thought that was over. I’m a bridesmaid in both of my brothers weddings and because of how the dresses are I have to wear a corset. But to wear that stupid thing I have to strip down to just my underwear and then someone has to hook it up in the back because I can’t do it myself. And so last night I had to try on the corset and once again I had to take off my clothes in front of my mom and she looked at my body and I hated it. I panicked. I thought this was over but it isn’t. I have to wear the corset multiple times so I’ll have to do it multiple times and I’m not comfortable and it sucks.



## **a new perspective**

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

It was right when Peter's talk with Tony that his phone went off. He was about to ignore it when he realized it was his lawyer.

"I'll get Peter, you need to take that," Pepper told him firmly, knowing that he wouldn't want to not get Peter.

After a moment of consideration he answered his phone, not bothering to put on his patented Tony Stark persona, "what's going on?"

Pepper took that as her cue to leave, waiting until she was in the hall to ask Friday if Peter was done talking with Sam. When Friday said they weren't done yet she started walking towards the main common room to wait. Not knowing how much longer Tony or Peter would take she figured getting a bit of work done would be most beneficial.

To her surprise when she entered the common room she came face to face with Wanda. Though Pepper and Wanda are two of the three women that live in the compound they still do not interact too much. Wanda keeps to herself more, and Pepper is much closer with Natasha.

But of course Pepper put on a smile and gave a friendly "hello" to the avenger.

"Hi," Wanda's smile back seemed almost relieved.

Even when Pepper dropped down onto the couch she still looks so more put together than seemingly possible.

It was after Pepper had responded back to a few emails on her Stark tablet that Wanda finally spoke up again, "how's Peter doing?"

Pepper closed the tablet and turned to face her, "It's a long journey. He's had improvements and setbacks, but we don't really know how deep it goes since he still isn't very comfortable talking to anyone."

Wanda nodded, eyes growing distant. When she didn't respond Pepper continued, "but you know that more than most of us. You actually saw what we...don't see."

"He's holding more pain in him than anyone ever should," her eyes stayed distant as she sat down next to Pepper.

"He misses you though, we all noticed how much he loved spending time with you," she told her.

Wanda nodded again, "Tony and Sam think I should talk with Peter again. Maybe not even about me going into his head, but to be friends again."

Pepper smiled again, "I think that's a really good idea."

"I'll talk to him," she decided.

...

Steve was drawing as Bucky sat with him, content to just watch the artist work. They spend many days like this, just relishing in each other's presence.

But Steve could see that there was something on Bucky's mind, "what're you thinking about Buck?"

There was no surprise when he answered with 'Peter'.

"When Tony had left to go meet May and I was here with Peter, he had a panic attack. But he actually did open up more," he revealed, putting his head on Steve's shoulder.

"Isn't that a good thing?" He asked, putting his pencil and notebook down.

"It's good that he trusted me with what he said, but what he said...I'm not going to go against his

trust and say what he told me, that wouldn't help anyone. But he does need help." He meant it in the most caring way and Steve understood that.

"Do you think him talking with Sam is helping?" Steve asked, genuinely wanting to know.

"I think it has the possibility to really help. But it all depends on how much Peter opens up. It's not easy, in any way, but it's necessary to get better," they both knew he was talking from experience. It took a long time just for Bucky to be comfortable with Steve even just being in the skate room as him when he has a nightmare, let alone actually try to help him.

"It's really good that he trusts you though," he tried to make the conversation a bit more positive.

"Yeah, I'm thankful for that."

...

"What did May say?" Tony demanded more than asked.

"She fought back a lot-" Tony quickly cut his lawyer off:

"Is she cooroportaing or not?"

"She's willing to make a compromise."

## Chapter End Notes

Yeah so it's been hard recently, and even harder to write. I had multiple ideas on what to do with this chapter but I didn't know how to actually execute them well, so I figured maybe giving a bit of other characters perspectives could be interesting. But also because I can't really mentally handle going into Peter's perspective at the moment, and I don't know legal stuff enough to do Tony's so I didn't know what else to do besides go into some of the other characters more. I know this story is mostly about Peter and Tony but I thought a chapter about the other characters would be okay and easier for me to write. I do plan on doing more soon with Peter and May and Tony and everything but I'm not really sure exactly when that'll happen with everything

going on in my life. I dissociated on and off all day today I'm just glad I got a chapter out.

## to find someone to go to

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“What does she mean by compromise?” Tony seethed, any thought of being composed out the window.

His fury did not faze his lawyer, “she means that she will only give you custody if she meets with Peter herself and he tells her he wants to stay with you.”

“Absolutely not, she will not be anywhere *near* Peter, let alone talk with him,” he decided without a second thought.

“I know you want to protect him, but in the long run one conversation will be a lot less harmful than a full out custody battle. And if she does say or do something you’ll be there to step in and stop her,” it may have been the mans overly composed tone that infuriated him the most.

Tony sighed, knowing he was right, “there’s no other way?”

“No,” though his lawyer was a man known to reveal no emotion he let some remorse seep through, “you should talk this through with Peter, he deserves to have a choice in the matter. If he decides not to see her then we have enough evidence to win, this would just be quicker and quieter.

Tony ran his fingers through his hair, already knowing how Peter will respond, “yeah, I’ll let you know.”

...

I was seriously considering talking to Sam about May but that was when I noticed the hour was almost over. Tony and Sam had figured that putting a general time limit on the talks would make it less suffocating knowing that it’ll be over soon.

I guess Sam picked up that I wasn’t really gonna talk anymore and he spoke up, “this was a good talk. I think it’s good to end it here,” he waited for me to nod in agreement before he continued, “thank you for talking.”

It was strange to be thanked for talking, I guess I still used to people wanting me to stay quiet. I learned early on in life that it's better to stay silent than to speak at all. It's difficult trying to teach myself to speak up.

Sam led me out to the main common room, but it took us both by surprise to not see Tony but to see Pepper and Wanda.

After a nervous glance around the room I asked, "where's Dad?" It took me less than a second to realize what I said but I tried my best to not react because if I did they are more likely to and I'm much too tired for that. Then again I'm always tired but whatever.

"He had to take a phone call, but he'll be back as soon as he can," Pepper assured me.

*But-but he's supposed to be here! He said he'd be here!*

I know it's not right for me to be angry or upset but I still am.

"Okay," was all I managed to get out. Yep that was extremely convincing, I am just *so great* at concealing my hurt.

As composed as ever Pepper filled the momentary silence we fell into after my pathetic response, "how was the talk?"

I haven't missed that they have been avoiding calling these 'talks' as sessions or therapy or counseling. It's not like I don't know what's going on.

"Fine," I mumbled. I'm so childish I need to just shut up already.

Quickly picking up that I didn't want to elaborate anymore Sam continued for me, "it went well. Is there another time that would work well for another talk?"

"I'll have to check definitively with Tony but next week should work well," I didn't miss the pain

in Peppers eyes as I knew she saw the pain in mine. But I'm the one that's hurting her just because I'm so weak that even Tony just not being here for me after a 'talk' hurts me. I'm such a moron.

*Maybe I haven't changed at all. It's crazy how much things can change in so so little time. Less than an hour ago I was feeling okay opening up more to Sam but now I'm back in this hole. Will I ever stop digging myself deeper?*

"Alright, just let me know," and with that Sam took his leave. It's strange how with two other people still in the room I'm still being suffocated with loneliness.

I'm not even sure why Wanda is here, she clearly wants nothing to do with me. But I can't and don't blame her.

"I'm gonna go to my room if that's okay," I didn't make eye contact with either of them.

"Okay honey, I'll send Tony over when he's done," Pepper thankfully allowed me to leave. I tried to walk out as quick as I could, without seeming too suspicious of course. It took way too much willpower than it should to force myself to breathe properly.

*I hate this so much. Tony has the right to take a phone call, he has the right to not be here. I shouldn't be upset. I shouldn't. I-I can't even breathe right what is wrong with me?!*

"Wait Peter," I didn't stop even though part of me desperately wanted to hear what she was going to say, "Peter!" Wanda called out again.

That time I did stop, but did not turn around. I stayed silent, waiting for her to speak before I fled again.

"I just wanted to apologize," her voice came out so timid, it sounded wrong coming from such a strong *strong* woman.

I knew that if I stayed any longer I would start hyperventilating, I hardly got out "you don't need to apologize," before I ran out.

Guilt only caused the snake to grip me tighter but I just needed to get out of there. I just need to calm down and *breathe* .

I didn't mean to sprint down the halls.

I didn't mean to slam my bedroom door.

I didn't mean to collapse on the floor.

I didn't mean to start hyperventilating.

But I couldn't help it...

...

The second Pepper saw Peter ran away she went to action.

First off, consoling Wanda, "it's not your fault, he's in a bad mindset right now. He will want to talk to you, just not right now."

Though she didn't look convinced, Pepper made her own getaway to find her fiancé.

It was quite convenient that she ran into Tony right as he was walking into the hallway.

"Hey, Pep, you okay?" Concern immediately washed over him.

"I'm okay, it's just when you weren't there when Peter got out of his session with Sam he seemed really upset that you weren't there. He ran off to his room, I'm not sure if it would be better for you to go check on him or for him to cool off first," she quickly explained, her normally put together self crumbling with worry.



“I’ll go check on him,” after giving her a quick peck on the cheek he went to Peter’s room.

...

It was a knock on my door that pulled me away from my thoughts, even if just for a moment. On instinct I quickly wiped at the stray tears on my face and by pure will forced myself to seem somewhat okay.

After forcing a deep breath I said, “yeah?” knowing it was most likely Pepper, Wanda, or Tony.

“It’s me kid,” Tony couldn’t hide the worry in his voice.

It was strange, suddenly it was like I didn’t want him there. Not that I didn’t want him to come, but that I didn’t want him to stay. Like, I want to know he cares enough to come, but I don’t actually want him here.

But I always want him here? I don’t know what’s happening.

I don’t want Pepper or even Wanda either though. I don’t want Happy, I don’t want Steve. That just leaves Bucky. But I can’t put this on him, it’s stupid.

“Can I come in Pete?” I almost forgot he was at the door.

“No-no I mean I’m fine,” wow okay that was just the perfect answer, shouldn’t I be better under pressure when I’m a superhero? Or was a superhero...

There isn’t anyone left, is there? I’m lonely but there’s no one that I want to go to that I *can* go to, and that’s...that’s more lonely than ever. It’s one thing to not have people, it’s another to technically have people around but no one to actually go to.

“Oh...okay Pete.”

It’s like the snake snapped me in half, all the air left my lungs at once and I couldn’t even try to

bring it back in.

“Dad,” I heard the word fall from my lips. I didn’t mean to say it aloud.

“I’m here, Pete,” he didn’t open the door, but I knew he was right there on the other side.

I didn’t know what to say.

## Chapter End Notes

It’s quite crazy how much things can change in just a few days. Thursday morning my family friend passed away. It doesn’t quite feel completely real yet though. My parents decided that my last memories of her should be good ones not of her with machines all around her as she takes her final breaths. But I know once I go to the wake and see her body that’ll feel real. That that’s when it’ll really hit me. That’s how it goes. I can’t even begin to explain what it’s like, I’ve been trying to write it out but there’s too many emotions swirling around and is too much.

But something good did happen I think. My sister in law and brother came home for the night and me and my sister in law talked for like 3 hours. I opened up to her. I told her about my anxiety, my panic attacks, dissociation, that my brother said he never believed me, about my parents. And she believed listened to me, and she believe me, and she said I can call her anytime. I finally found someone within my family to talk to who actually understands. So there’s been a lot of bad, a lot, but also some good. I’m not really sure where my mental state is right now since most of it doesn’t feel real but maybe that’s okay.

I feel like this chapter went 100 different directions I hope it made some sense.

## someone who it doesn't matter what they think of me

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Dissociation can feel like balloons. Like I'm just floating up and away, higher and higher. I'm weightless.

But sometimes those balloons pop. And I go plummeting to the earth, I smack against the ground with a *crack*. I shatter. It hurts so so badly and everything hits me at once and it hurts more than before I floated away.

Sometimes the balloons just deflate, just get smaller and smaller until they can't carry me anymore. It's so draining.

But sometimes the balloons never come. I want them to come. I wish I could control them, if I could I would make them come now. But I can't.

I can't help but see the parallel between right now and the day I jumped from the bridge. I locked myself in the bathroom that day, and right now I locked myself in my room. I didn't have a lock in my room at Mays apartment.

Tony is on the other side of the door. He was then too. But that time, I was too scared to let him in. Now? Now I just...I don't want him in here. Maybe it's not that I don't want him to stay at all, but that I don't want him to come in the room. I don't want him to leave either though.

I don't know. My confusion is almost enough to overpower the panic still gripping my chest. I still can only take in the most shallow of breaths to try to get any air in.

I heard him lower himself to the floor and lean against the door. *Maybe he is staying.*

I don't want to be alone. I know that. Nothing good ever comes from me being alone when I'm like this. But there's also no one I can go to.

Normally I always want Tony, normally he's my first choice, but right now? Right now I don't think he can help me. He's not my savior, I know that. But I still don't know how to save myself.

Maybe I was right before, that I just need a stranger. Someone I have no obligation to, someone who it doesn't matter what they think of me. *If I tell that to Tony will he even understand what I mean?*

I crawled over to the door, I heard his breath catch in his throat. I know he'll be disappointed when I don't open it.

"Dad?" I whispered into the door.

"I'm here, kid," he assured me.

"I'm sorry," I didn't mean for that to be the first thing out of my mouth but it's so natural.

"Kid, it's not your fault you panicked," he sighed. I could hear the disappointment in his voice, but I can't tell if it was directed towards me or him.

"I-I think I need...no nevermind, it's stupid nevermind." *I almost was stupid enough to actually say it.*

"I'm sure it's not stupid. I'm here to try to help you Pete, I can't do that unless I know what you need." I still wonder how he has so much patience for me.

I tried my best to take a deep breath, "I just...I think I need someone here who I don't really know. Someone who it doesn't matter what they think of me, who we have no obligation to each other. Does that make sense?"

He took a breath, "yeah, it does Pete. Do you want someone else from the team who you haven't met yet?"

I shrugged even though I know he can't see me. "Sure..."

I heard him get up. I heard him whisper, "I'll be back soon." I heard him walk away.

I know that I'm the one that asked him to find someone else, but it still hurt when he walked away. But I have no right to be hurt. I hurt him first. *I hurt him again.*

...

When he was out of Peter's enhanced earshot he asked Friday, "where's Natasha?"

"In her room with Sergeant Barnes," upon hearing where she is he broke out into a light jog.

The only reason he bothered to knock on the door is because he knows Natasha might actually kill him if he doesn't.

"It's Tony," he announced, not willing to waste any more time.

"Come in," and he finally opened the door. He tried to keep a straight face upon seeing Natasha Romanoff braiding Bucky Barnes' hair.

"Natasha, I need to talk to you," he went straight to the point.

"Do you want me to leave?" Bucky already started to get up.

"No, just..." he sighed, not bothering to hide his clear frustration, "after me you're the one Peter trusts most." It still left a bitter taste in his mouth to say. That of all people, Peter connected with *Bucky Barnes* the most.

"Is it about your son?" Natasha smirked.

"Yeah, yeah it is," he was not willing to play games at that moment, "he's panicking in his room and he doesn't want to be alone," before either of them could ask any questions he continued, "he wants someone that 'it doesn't matter what they think of him', someone he hasn't met yet. Nat... can you please come sit with him?" It is not in his nature to sound so vulnerable, especially in front of not only Natasha but Bucky.

“Of course,” all playfulness left and she got up, somehow finishing Bucky’s braid in those few seconds.

With that, the boys dad and the assassin made their way to Peter’s room.

...

It was only after Tony walked away that I realized what I just did.

I made Tony leave. My idiocy and desperation caused him to leave.

And now he’s trying to find someone else to be here with me. I basically just told my dad that I don’t want him. I’m going to have to meet someone new now. The snake stole what was left of my breath.

*I actually made Tony leave.* That thought alone makes me want to cry.

A knock at the door sounded. I couldn’t help the momentary panic when my mind flashed back to May banging on my door and I was trapped and I’ll always be trapped *I’ll always be trapped-*

“Hey Underoos, I brought Natasha, I think you’ll like her,” Tony’s voice was soft, I like when he makes his voice soft.

“Can I come in Peter?” Natasha asked.

“...yeah,” I just have to hope it didn’t hurt Tony too much when I let her in but not him. I quickly crawled away from the door, as I was still leaning against it.

She opened the door slowly, I appreciated that. It took her less than a second to notice me on the ground. She smiled, and gestures to the floor next to me, I knew what she was asking and I made a small nod. After closing the door she sat down next to me.

It was when I saw the closed door that I wondered if Tony would stay or leave. I'm not sure which I preferred, but I knew which was most likely.

"Hi Peter, I'm Natasha."

I quickly tried to remember if she was on Tony's side at the airport, if she has a grudge against me. *Black Widow was there, she fought on our side, so maybe she doesn't dislike me yet.*

"Hi Ms. Romanoff," I didn't make eye contact, I just stayed sitting there with my knees pulled against my chest. *I must look so small.*

"It's Natasha," she smiled at me. I never thought someone who's known to be so scary could seem so...comforting.

"I'm sorry," I still didn't dare meet her gaze.

"Not a problem," she answered so easily, as if sitting with some strange teenager on the floor of his room is normal.

I took a second to try to hear if Tony was still outside the door or not, but I couldn't tell. I guess I'm too out of it.

"Do you want to do something, or talk, or just sit here? I'm completely comfortable with whatever," she spoke softly but kindly.

I shrugged, really not knowing.

"Okay well how about we do something," she decided, my eyes widened, *I'm not ready to leave my room*, as if she read my mind she continued, "we'll stay in here but what is it you like to do?"

"Um...I like to draw?" She nodded, waiting to see if I would continue, "and I like Legos and photography."

“Well that’s settled then, we can draw,” she stood up, asking if I had any pencils and paper.

Getting up on my shaky legs was a bit of a struggle, but I ignored it and grabbed my notebook and pencils. I don’t have a pencil sharpener anymore.

“Have you ever drawn with Steve? He’s an amazing artist,” she said as she sat down on my bed, I sat down next to her.

As I ripped out a blank page of the notebook for her, I answered, “I did, yeah. It was nice...”

Not really sure what to draw I just did some little sketches of the Spider-Man emblem. I couldn’t really tell but it looked like she was drawing a bow and arrows.

We just drew for a few minutes, it was nice to be doing something with my hands. And it was nice to have someone here. For someone who honestly I would think would be really judgemental as a spy, she really doesn’t seem like it. I like her presence.

*I know what she’s doing. She’s trying to distract me...but I don’t mind.*

## Chapter End Notes

Well it’s been a little while since I last updated and a lot has happened. I think this is the longest I’ve gone without updating this story. I did write a one shot though, for this series but set before the events of this fic. I needed to write about that stuff but it just didn’t fit into this plot line. I am glad that I waited to update this though, that I waited until I was in a better mindset to write it. I tried to write this chapter several times but with everything going on the chapter was just very dark and sad and I didn’t want to screw over this story because of stuff happening in real life. I know this chapter isn’t happy but it’s something. I’m planning on updating more often again. Thank you for your patience.



## to change

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

It was while we sat there just drawing that I realized that *this isn't what I want with my life.*

I don't want to just distract myself until my next panic attack. I don't want to just go through the motions hoping I won't have another breakdown. I don't want to keep wasting all my time.

I need to change something. I've said that before and maybe I'll keep saying it. I need to do something, not soon, right now. I need to do something that will change things.

I could see May again. *No no that would be stupid. That would probably ruin everything.*

I could run away. *But then I'll lose everyone, I can't do that.*

But the premise of running away? Being free and living how I want? Yeah I need to do that, be that.

I could talk to Wanda. *Yeah, I need to do that.*

*I could be Spider-Man again.*

Yeah, that *that* would change things.

But first I should probably talk to Wanda...and to Tony...

"Natasha?" She looked up at me expectantly, but patiently, "um...so before I-I ran in here, Wanda wanted to talk to me. I've been waiting so so long to talk to her but like, I wasn't in a good mindset. And I'm still not I guess...but like I do want to talk to her. Do you think it's too late?"

She only took a second to think about it, "I don't think it's too late. If you think you're in a good enough mindset to talk to her then you should go for it."

“Can you...um, would you mind coming with me?” My voice came out sounding so pathetic.

“Of course,” she smiled at me, already standing up. *If I had her confidence maybe I would be in a better place.*

...

“He didn’t want me,” Tony buried his head in his hands.

Pepper put a hand on her fiancé’s back, “he needs his space.”

A bitter laugh fell from Tony’s lips, “he didn’t need space from Natasha, who he doesn’t even *know*.”

“You said he told you that he needed someone he doesn’t know,” Pepper reasoned, “It kind of makes sense. He doesn’t want to disappoint you, he can’t disappoint someone he doesn’t know.”

“Him panicking doesn’t disappoint me,” his voice completely serious.

“Does Peter know that?” Pepper retorted.

Tony’s quick remark swiftly died out when he actually thought about the answer. Does Peter actually know that?

...

After asking Friday where Wanda is, we walked back to the common room we originally saw her at. She didn’t leave.

Upon seeing me she immediately started apologizing, “Peter I am so sorry I just-” but I didn’t let her finish.

“It’s not your fault, it’s mine. I shouldn’t have ran out like that I’m sorry. Do you still want to talk?”

It looked as if a small weight left her shoulders, “yes, I would love to talk.”

With that we sat down on the couch. Natasha made eye contact with me, a silent question, I nodded and with that she left me and Wanda to talk.

She started, “I know it’s been a while and a lot has happened, but... I don’t want to lose our friendship. I know I’ve made mistakes and I really am sorry, I hope you can forgive me one day.”

“Forgive...?” It took me a second. “There’s nothing I have to forgive you for.”

*I mean, there’s really not. Yeah I figured that she may have done something with my mind but it’s not like I actually know. I need to give her benefit of the doubt, right?*

Instead of relieved she only seemed to grow more worried.

“Peter...” she took a deep breath, “do you remember around the time we went to the city together?”

“I remember...I had a panic attack at the shawarma place.” *I don’t want to remember that.*

“You had passed out. While you were unconscious...Tony had me... I went into your mind.”

For a moment, everything stopped. This feels like it was so long, but I remember my pain and anger so clearly. *I thought he was acting like May.*

I couldn’t find any words for her.

*I knew that, well at least I thought I knew that he wanted her to go into my mind, but she really did*

*it. She did it without my permission, she went in while I was unconscious. That-that's a violation of my privacy! No, it's my mind, part of me, that's a violation of me!*

“Peter?”

*But, she said that ‘Tony had her’, he’s the one that wanted us to be friends, he pushed for it. He’s the one that said he would protect me, he’s the one that said he was there for me. He’s not supposed to be like May.*

“Did you want to do it?” *Did Tony make you?*

“No, not without your permission,” she looked heartbroken. *But so am I.*

*Tony is the only one who could have gotten her to do it, he’s the only one who has any say in my rights.*

*Isn’t this like May? I know I shouldn’t compare them, they aren’t the same people, but that’s the experience I have. She would have gone into my mind, she would have without asking. But they didn’t get my permission, they didn’t get my consent.*

“Tony had you do it?” *I need to know.*

She stayed silent. I knew the answer.

*He...why would he do that?*

*Do I even have the right to be upset? I already was upset about this when it happened, I didn’t know for sure but I had a pretty good idea. This was a little while ago, shouldn’t I just accept it? I mean, he hasn’t done anything like it again, but would he?*

“I need to talk to Tony,” I stood up and already started going towards the door.

“Peter wait,” she called out, “it was my choice. I chose to do it, it’s my fault.”

Then a new question formed in my head, “what did you see?”

“Peter-” she started, but I turned back around.

“It’s my head, I want to know what you saw,” I normally would never be so demanding.

She took a deep breath, her eyes beginning to grow distant, my snake held tighter.

“A lot of blood,” was what she started with, “there was a...a big snake coiling around everything.”

But I knew there was more, I waited for her to continue. I sat down next to her again.

“Graves. With names etched in,” she breathed out.

My own breath caught in my throat, “who’s names?”

“Peter-” she tried again.

“Whose names?” It would have sounded more demanding if my voice didn’t crack.

“Your aunt and uncle...and Tony,” she finally revealed.

“Was there anything else,” I whispered.

“There was a ferry horn that kept ringing. And a lot of voices, some screaming and some whispering. At the end white balloons floated around before blood filled everything,” she looked past exhausted by the time she finished recalling it all.

*She saw it all...*

With how haunted she looks...there's no way she would ever come back in my mind. At least, I don't think she would.

*Does she know what it all means?*

I thought she was done but she spoke again, "he wanted to know why you had that panic attack."

I nodded.

There wasn't as much anger left in me for the moment, just the drained feeling.

"Did you two get what you wanted?" I managed to ask, not meeting her eye.

"I don't know," she seemed honest, her eyes were still distant though.

*I-I still need to apologize to Tony though.*

"Thank you for telling me," neither of us expected me to say that.

That caught her attention, "why are you thanking me?"

"At least I know for sure now," I shrugged. "I have one last question though. Did you ever tell Tony what you saw?"

"Not very much," I couldn't tell what emotions she was feeling at that.

"I'm going to go talk to Tony. I won't blame you, and I'll try to make sure he won't either," I tried to assure her before I walked out of the room.

...

As soon as I saw him all remnants of the anger I had just melted into regret.

“Dad,” he looked at me, a soft but pained smile on his face. With that I just ran forward and wrapped my arms around him, hoping with everything in me that he would hug me back. And he did, his strong arms wrapped around me and held me tight. “I’m sorry,” I tried hard to not choke on my words, “I’m so sorry.”

*About everything.*

Without loosening his hold on me he responded, “Pete, how about we make a new rule?” It wasn’t really a question, “no more apologizing.”

“Wait what?” I still stayed in the hug but moved my head to look at him. *How can I just not apologize?*

“Kid, you apologize about everything, and I know it’s because you really are sorry but you don’t need to be.” I couldn’t find it in me to argue him at the moment. “And kid...I am not ever, and will never be disappointed in you for panicking about something, okay.”

I nodded.

*I need to just say it’ll or I never will* , “Dad, I want to be Spider-Man again.”

## Chapter End Notes

Sorry if this feels redundant I just felt like I needed to definitely tie up that whole little plot line. I’m trying to start tying up the loose ends.

## to punish myself

### Chapter Notes

(tw, self harm and panic attack)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

That was when I realized how abrupt I was. I quickly pulled back from the hug and tried to fix it, “I know we kinda talked about it before, but then I just brushed it off again. You said we could talk through it but we never really did, and I miss being Spider-Man and being helpful and having a purpose.”

“Kid you do know you have a purpose outside of Spider-Man, right?” That’s what he chose to respond to.

“Yeah I know,” *no I don’t. What other purpose could I possibly have?* “So would we maybe be able to talk about being Spider-Man again?”

He just looked at me for a second, looking for something but I don’t know what, “sure, Underoos. Do you wanna talk about it right now?”

“If we can?” *I’m pushing him I really don’t mean to push but this is important and I don’t want to just brush it off again.*

With that he sat down on the nearest couch and I followed suit.

“It’s not going to be the same as with May, okay? Since I actually know what you’re doing out there, there needs to be some ground rules,” he was completely serious when he said it.

“Like what?” *I can’t help but feel like he’s taking away the freedom of Spider-Man.*

By now not only have I gotten better at seeing his emotions but he’s also taken down some of his walls. I could see the care and worry and pride and...and I want to say love, when he looks at me. But I’m probably wrong.



“If anything happens, whether it be you...you get hurt or you need help, *anything*, call me,” the amount of worry in him was more than I ever thought I’d see, “You can’t just say your fine and move on, if you need help I will come.”

“Okay,” I know it’s a bad response but I don’t know what else to say.

“I know when you were with May I tried to make sure you had a curfew, but I also know you didn’t follow it,” I felt my cheeks blush red, he chuckled a bit before continuing, serious again, “but now you’ll have a definite curfew. You need to get your sleep, and I know I’m not good with getting sleep myself, but that’s not a habit I want you to get.”

*But it’s better if I don’t sleep. I can’t have nightmares if I don’t sleep.*

“Anything else?” I asked.

“Well not at the top of my head, but we do need to figure out now how this will actually work since we’re Upstate.”

“Yeah, that’s true.” *I have no idea how that’ll work...*

He sighed, “well, after the whole incident with...during homecoming, I didn’t end up selling the tower,” he took another deep breath, “If you wanted, we would be able to stay there.”

By the look of his face I knew that going back to that tower, his old home, was the last thing he wanted.

If we went back though, I would be able to go back to school. I haven’t been to school since the stuff with May went down, I don’t even know if I would be able to catch up if I went back. Tony told me before not to worry about it, but like I can’t just never go to school again.

*Ned is there...*

I've successfully avoided talking about Ned for months now. He was my best friend. And I ruined it.

He found out that I cut. I didn't mean for it to happen, I never wanted him to know, to have that weight. One time, I cut a bit deeper than usual but still the same quantity. It hurt. Walking hurt, showering hurt, my clothes rubbing against them hurt.

I had been at his house, we were doing homework together when I got up to go to the bathroom. While I was walking back I hit my hip on the kitchen table, which was where Ned had been sitting. I let out a yelp of pain to which Ned jumped up and ran over to see if I was okay. I tried to play it off, saying it was an injury I got while being Spider-Man but that only worried him more. I know he just wanted to help.

He offered to help bandage me up, he asked what happened and how it happened. It was too many questions and I couldn't come up with so many convincing lies on the spot. I tried to get him to back off, saying it was nothing, but he knew me better than that. He knew something was seriously wrong.

Well I guess he knew that for a little while, he was the one person to be able to see through my mask of 'I'm fine'. He had approached me multiple times asking what was wrong, saying he was there for me, that I could tell him anything. But I knew if I told him he would leave. Everyone leaves. That's just how this works.

I didn't know a good lie to explain why my thigh and hip hurt so badly. I floundered and that only escalated his worry.

That was when he seemed to realize what actually happened. His voice was so careful, so heartbroken when he asked if I did it to myself. No one had ever asked me so straightforward before, well no one had asked at all. That was before I let it slip to my counselor and he told May.

I didn't know how to lie about it. I had lied about so many injuries being Spider-Man, but I couldn't come up with a lie for my self-harm. I tried to answer, to come up with something, anything, but I didn't have the words. But I guess that was answer enough.

*I'm so stupid.*

He quickly ran forward and pulled me into a tight hug, I heard him sniffle. *I made him cry.* That

was when I realized just how bad this was, I made Ned cry. I pulled back and stepped away from him. I told, or rather begged, for him not to tell anyone as tears dripped from my own eyes. Then I mumbled something about needing to go, and with that I ran out of his house. I didn't bother to grab my homework or even my backpack, I didn't care enough.

He tried to run after me, he tried to stop me, but he just wasn't fast enough. Even with my thigh on fire I didn't stop running until I was at May's apartment.

*I never stopped running.*

He called me, I ignored it. He texted me, I didn't open it. He called again, I let it go to voicemail. I never listened to the voicemails. I know he must hate me, I put that insufferable weight on him then just ran away. I blocked his number that night, I didn't even know how I could talk to him.

*I'm so cruel.*

At school he tried to talk to me but I brushed it off. I had to work harder than ever to keep up my mask, to seem okay. I deflected all his questions and came up with excuses to get out of really talking to him. I didn't want to hurt him, *god no I never wanted to hurt him*, but I knew in the long run it would help him. Because if I ended it then he wouldn't have to carry my weight anymore, then I couldn't hurt him any further. I didn't want to hurt him at all but it was necessary to help him later. To help him now.

Like when you break a bone and it heals wrong, you need to break it again to make it heal correctly. I had to break it so that he would be better later.

It took weeks before he left me alone. I don't even want to go into the amount of panic attacks I had over this whole ordeal. I had to come up with lies to May and to Happy, to May about why I wasn't spending time with Ned, and to Happy why I wasn't talking about him.

*He left.*

I waited everyday for someone to approach me about the self-harm, for Ned to tell someone. He never did. I don't blame him in any way, it's what I asked. I'm sure he was scared, he was in way over his head. He didn't deserve it. He never deserved what I did to him, the pain I caused him.

I punished myself for it. For being stupid. For letting Ned find out. But most of all, for hurting him. I wanted him to stay. I almost thought he would, but I don't blame him for leaving. Well I guess, I left him first. Yeah, I did, I left him. It was to protect him, it was necessary. If the only way to help him is to leave then I'll do it. And I did.

After a while it seemed like life moved on. But I didn't. Maybe I should have. I still think about him all the time. I still need to punish myself for hurting him. That's not something I can just do once and think it's enough. *It's only fair.*

*I need to punish myself. It's overdue. It's how I learn.*

I didn't realize just how much time had passed during my whole flashback thing, whatever that was. It was only when Tony touched me, putting his hand on my arm, that was when I flinched back to reality. Well, the present reality.

After trying to remember what we were talking about I answered, "No, we don't need to go back to the tower."

*I can't go back there.*

Though relief seemed to fill him, for both me seeming okay, at least I hope so, and for my answer, he still asked, "are you sure?"

"Yeah, I'm sure."

*I need to get away, I need to cut. It's been too long and I need to, I deserve to.*

*But Friday will tell Tony. Well, I bet I can find a way to work around it, I need to.*

"Kid, what's going on? You keep spacing out." *How am I this stupid?*

"I'm fine," it's such an automatic response, but it was the wrong one.

“Peter, we really need new responses to that, ‘I’m fine’ doesn’t work anymore,” I know he didn’t mean to but that only made my heartbeat quicken, “You can tell me anything,” he sounded so sincere. But he’s just wrong.

*How am I supposed to tell him that I need to cut to punish myself? He would never understand...*

“I’m just tired,” again just an automatic response.

He still didn’t seem convinced, “why don’t you go rest then.”

“Okay.” *This is my chance. I need to do it. If I don’t do it now I may never.*

I had to actively try to walk at a normal pace, I just need to get it over with. Once I made it to my room I quickly grabbed the blade I still have. It was then that I realized that I really don’t know what kind of protocols Tony has set up.

“Friday, I’m going to go for a walk. I need some fresh air,” I hope my voice sounded normal. Maybe Friday can’t watch me if I’m outside, or at least maybe I’ll have more time.

“I need to inform Boss of your departure,” she responded.

I held the blade tighter, “it’s okay Fri, I’ll be back soon, I’m just tired of being stuck in here so long.”

There was a pause, it was like she was thinking, “I will inform Boss in ten minutes.” *How did that even work?*

*It’ll be enough time I think. I hope.*

I made my way outside and just ran. I ran into the woods to make sure there was no chance Friday could see what I’m doing and tell Tony. *I can’t let him find out.*

I ran until I couldn’t see the compound anymore, with that I collapsed against a tree.

The blade is so familiar in my hand. I know its edges and curves, I know how it feels.

Just to keep up with my old routine, I dragged the blade over my left wrist. Light enough so that it doesn't pierce the skin, but hard enough that I know I can if I wanted to. I want to, but that's too risky to hide.

*I just need to do it, or I never will.*

I forgot to bring band-aids. It'll be fine, it's not like I ever go too deep. Quantity over depth.

I figured I had some time, so I pulled down my pants just enough to see my thigh, to see my scars. They're mostly faded by now. I don't want them to fade. They're a constant.

I did the first one quick. It wasn't deep enough. I waited a moment but it didn't bleed. I tried again, over the same spot, a bit harder. I saw blood but it didn't drip out. I tried again.

Again and again and again and again and again.

It only made my breathing increase more rapidly and my chest tighten even more when my leg wouldn't just bleed already. That's all I need, for it to bleed. It doesn't need to be a lot but enough to see it. To see that it's real, that I'm real. To see my pain manifest itself physically.

It hurts, but that's the point. It doesn't even hurt as much as I thought it would, that realization only upset me further. I deserve the pain. I deserve it all.

I kept going, overlapping them, trying to go deeper with each quick swipe across my leg but they still refused to bleed. I saw them open, I saw the blood in them, but it wouldn't drip out. I just want the blood.

*Ned wouldn't want this.*

But it's not for him, not necessarily, it's for me. It's punishment. I deserve the pain.

I know I've felt physical pain much much worse than this, but for some reason it felt too much. I had to take a few moments to compose myself before cutting again. I had to do that multiple times. Every time I stopped, I told myself that I need to, that I deserve it. And it worked, I kept going. And going.

I must have gotten around forty cuts when I realized that only one was bleeding, yet even that one was barely letting loose any blood.

The problem is not that I don't have coping skills, it's that I don't care to use them. It's that there are no other good ways to punish myself. I need to be punished. I need to be able to press my hand against my thigh and feel the burn to remind myself to be more careful. I need to be able to see the blood and know that I deserve it.

Usually cutting helps me level out, forces me into that strange numb state unlike anything else. Not this time. *Not this time.*

Every cut only seemed to make me panic more. It was only when I was shaking so much that I couldn't hold the blade right that I had to stop. I almost wanted to stop with how much panic was choking me.

*I pushed myself into a panic attack.*

*But I deserve this too.*

I pulled my pants back up to hide what I just did, the cuts burned against the cloth rubbing against them. I relished in the burning, but it didn't calm me down. It only seemed to make my chest tighten unbearably more. My breaths refused to be even. That's when the tears came. I used to cut sometimes to keep me from crying, now it's doing the opposite.

That was when I heard the thrusters. That was when I knew just how much I screwed this up.

I quickly shoved the blade into my pocket, wiped my tears away, and forced myself to take a deep breath. It's so natural to pretend to be okay.

*But Tony doesn't want me to pretend...he would be so disappointed though. I don't want him to be disappointed. I can't tell him. I can't tell anyone.*

*It'll be like before. No one needs to know.*

It took him only a few minutes to find me, maybe he thought it would take longer. The look of rage on his face was enough to make me want to run away and never come back. *I deserve this though.*

I stood up as he got out of his suit.

It was some angry curses that left his mouth before he could make a complete sentence, "what-why-" he had to stop to try to compose himself better, "why did you decide to just leave the compound and run to the woods?!" But it still came out in a shout. I felt the tears press against my eyes, I pushed them back.

Before I could even try to answer he kept yelling, I tried to back up but my back was already against the tree, "Do you understand how utterly *terrified* I was to find out that you left?! That you convinced Friday to just let you leave?! Do you understand how scared I was?" His shouting was starting to quiet, "do you realize the last time you ran off like this was the day...I thought you were trying to leave again."

*He thought I was going to attempt again. I didn't think about that.*

I didn't understand. I didn't think about how this would affect him. *I hurt him again.*

It took a lot of will to not press my hand against my cuts.

I didn't know the words to say. I don't think there are words to fix it. *Maybe it would have been better if he was right.*

"I thought I lost you," I'm not sure if I've heard him more broken. *I did that. I deserve every ounce of pain I just inflicted myself and so so much more.*

It took all that was left of my strength to not cry right there.



There is no apology that could suffice for this. There is nothing I can say to fix it. *I broke his trust.* Just that sentence alone made me want to...do bad things.

In that moment I wanted nothing more than for him to hold and hug me and tell me he's here and that he's not leaving and that it'll be okay that he'll be with me through this. But I don't deserve that.

"Do you have anything to say?" I'm not sure if there was more hurt or anger in his voice. *I don't think there is anything I can say.*

That was when I had no strength left. That was when I broke.

It started with a small choking noise, I quickly tried to cover my mouth. The tears slipped down my face blinding me with blurriness. I tried to take a breath in but the oxygen wouldn't come.

I felt him try to wrap his arms around me, but I flinched back.

A weak "no..." was all I was able to whimper as I tried to back away from him. Though every fiber of my being knows I need him, I need his comfort, I need his love, but that I don't deserve it.

In a pathetic sob I couldn't get any air in at all. All I did was cry out, tears and snot dripping off my face into the grass. My next attempt to breathe was about the same efficiency as hyperventilating, just a quick gasp for air, but another long sob took over before more air could come in. There was just no possible way for me to force myself to stop crying. With how much cutting failed to level me out just minutes before, even if I could cut again it wouldn't help.

I didn't mean to break down in front of him. If anything, he's the one that should be breaking down, not me. I'm the one that hurt him and I can't even stay somewhat composed.

I couldn't even see him with all my tears blocking my sight. I couldn't hear him over my gross sobs. More tears and snot poured down my face and even in my panic I was still disgusted with myself.

I began to wonder if he was still there as I cried, I couldn't blame him if he left.

Sometimes when I cry too hard I throw up. That's what happened. I couldn't remember when I last got a sufficient amount of oxygen in and then the nausea hit. I didn't have any strength to stop it. As my food came up my knees gave out. I felt him wrap his arms around me again, sitting down with me next to the mess I just created. He made sure I didn't fall into it. I didn't have enough strength or air to try to tell him 'no' again, let alone push him away.

He held me in his lap as I just sobbed. Loud, gross sobs. He held me close, I could feel his chest rising and falling but I still couldn't breathe. I thought I felt something drip on my head.

*I made him cry too.*

I knew I should pull away, end his torture, but I physically couldn't. I felt another round of nausea hit me and that gave me enough adrenaline to pull away from him enough to not get sick on him. He ran his hand up and down my back as I let out what was left of the food in me. As soon as I was done he pulled me back to his chest.

I don't understand why he's staying. I don't deserve this. I deserve to be left. I deserve pain and more pain. I don't understand.

He held me through every loud sob, his strong arms never faltering. Even as he cried softly he kept his breaths even enough for me to try to follow. He's just strong like that.

With the way I was curled up against him my cuts were being pressed against and they *burned*. I tried to focus on the pain to calm myself but it didn't work. It only seemed to make matters worse. *It's not a constant anymore...*

I think he could tell I was in physical discomfort, and not just because I spewed my guts out a few minutes prior.

He tried to talk to me but I couldn't even make sense of his words, let alone calm down enough to respond. *He knows what I did.*

*He wasn't supposed to know. This was supposed to be like before, no one finds out, it's my secret. It's supposed to be my burden to bare. He doesn't need it, he doesn't deserve it. He doesn't deserve any of this. He never did.*

I guess it was my utter exhaustion that finally got me to stop crying, and with my crying slowed to a stop, breathing became a bit easier. I tried to follow his, now, exaggerated breaths to force mine to even out.

I'm still a mess though.

But he didn't let me go, he just shifted us further away from where I vomited. Even with my tears stopped and my breaths deeper he still held me.

He spoke then, "Peter...please tell me what's going on." There was no more anger in his voice, but still just as much pain and heartbreak. Maybe even more.

"I'm sorry," was the first thing out of my mouth. My voice came out so weak and small with how completely exhausted I am.

"Kid-" he tried but I cut him off.

"I'm so *so* sorry," if I hadn't just run out of tears I would have started crying again. "I didn't mean for it to be like this." *I never mean for it to be like this.*

"You can't control panic attacks," he tried to reason.

I frantically shook my head 'no', "I pushed myself into it, it's my fault."

*It's all my fault.*

*I think I make progress, they say I do, but then comes days like this. Days were I cut again, I relapsed. I was clean for a while and I just threw that all away. Days were I have another panic attack. Days were I show everyone that I'm still that same weak, broken kid that jumped off a bridge.*

Then the realization hit me, "you can't adopt me."

There were so many emotions that crossed his face, so much shock and pain and hurt and...and I'm not sure what else.

"You need to leave me," *I need him to understand*, "I hurt you. I keep hurting you. This will be better for you, you can't adopt me."

"Peter-" that, *that* is the most heartbroken I've ever heard his voice. He couldn't find anymore words.

Again I frantically shook my head, he doesn't get it, "no, no you don't understand. I'm trying to help you," my breathing increased with each sentence, "I keep hurting you. I'm not getting better. I *can't* get better. I can't keep hurting you. I'm trying to help."

I didn't mean to start hyperventilating.

"Shh," he hushed me, pulling me against his chest again, taking more exaggerated breaths, "I'm here." *But you shouldn't be.*

"Why?" I choked out.

He didn't need any time to think about the answer, "because I love you, Peter."

He let the words sink in before he continued, "I'm staying because I love you. I'm adopting you because I love you. And you can not and will not ever be able to convince me to leave you. Do you still want me to adopt you?"

"I don't want to hurt you," my weak voice responded.

"That wasn't the question," I don't understand how he still has patience for me.

"...yes..." I want with every fiber of my being to be his son. But I care more about not hurting him, I can't keep hurting him.

I sniffed and somehow managed to sit closer against him, to soak in all the comfort I can. He kept his arms wrapped around my body.

I could feel that with my answer, he breathed a little easier.

We stayed there, me curled up against him as he held me, for a few more minutes before he spoke again.

“I’m sorry I yelled at you,” I could tell he wasn’t finished so I just listened, “I was so scared, *so scared*, to lose you. I was terrified and when I saw you here, my fear came out as anger. I shouldn’t have yelled at you.”

“It’s okay.” *I deserved it.*

It’s like he read my thoughts, “You don’t deserve for me to yell at you.”

I don’t know how to respond to that.

But I thought of a question, “are you disappointed in me?”

“I already told you Pete, I’ll never be disappointed in you for having a panic attack.”

“But what about...?” I couldn’t get myself to say it but I know he knows.

He sighed, *he’s disappointed*, “I’m not disappointed in you for cutting again.” *I knew he figured it out.* I couldn’t detect any lie in his voice, it doesn’t make sense. “But I need to have Friday scan you when we go back to the compound.”

*Will he make me take my clothes off? If Friday says I’m fine can I not?*

I didn’t mean to hold onto him tighter and let out a whimper as he shifted to stand up. He hugged

me close one more time before saying it was time to get up. He helped me stand, my legs still shaky. I didn't question him as he got into his suit and picked me up, one arm under my knees the other around my back. It was a very quick flight to get back to the compound as I had not ran too far away. Immediately upon arriving he had me sit down and told Friday to scan me."

"There are several lacerations on his thigh, but none need stitches. A large band aid will suffice," she concluded. But my chest still stayed tight as I waited to see what Tony would do.

He turned to me, "kid, if I give you a bandaid do you promise to put it on your leg?"

I nodded, the amount of relief flooding over me was kind of sad. He went into the closest bathroom and found a bandage in a first aid kit, he handed it to me before exiting the bathroom and letting me do it myself. When I pulled down my pants again I really took in the damage I did. By then the cuts had really set in, each one a dark red, there were a few spots of blood but really not a lot. I had to refrain from running my fingers over them. First I used a tissue to wipe away the blood before I quickly placed the bandaid, pulled up my pants, and exited the bathroom. He was right there when I came out.

He hugged me again. It felt safe. When he pulled away he still kept an arm around me and led me back to my room.

"Do you want me to stay with you until you fall asleep?" I immediately answered 'yes' not caring at the moment how desperate I sound for him to stay.

We walked to my bed, I waited for him to settle himself and I laid down next to where he sat, my head in his lap. For the moment, I didn't care how clingy I seemed, I just wanted to soak in all the comfort he was willing to give.

Again, we fell into a silence. But it was comfortable, us taking in each other's presence.

He broke the silence again, "Peter..." he took another second to make sure he was wording his sentence correctly, "can I ask why you cut today?"

The answer was easy, "to punish myself."

His breath caught in his throat.

“Why do you need to punish yourself,” he managed to ask. *Why wouldn't I need to?*

How am I even supposed to answer that? I've avoided these topics for a reason.

“So that I stop hurting people,” I finally answered. But it wasn't a good answer as that only seemed to upset him more.

“Who are you hurting?” His voice was softer now.

“Everyone,” he waited for me to continue, “you, May, Bucky, Steve, Happy, Wanda, Pepper, Natasha, Ned-” am I really that stupid that I actually listed his name?

“Ned? What-”

“Nothing!” Wow can I be any more suspicious. “Can we just...can we please not talk about it now?”

He stopped and looked at me, “okay. We'll talk about it later.” I think the only reason he let it drop is because he knows how completely exhausting, mentally, emotionally, and physically, it is to have a panic attack.

With that he let me rest. It wasn't long before I fell asleep.

## Chapter End Notes

I'm so sorry guys I did not realize just how much time has passed since my last update, I'm trying to be better about that.

I do believe this is my longest chapter yet though so I'm proud of that. I really hope it makes sense. Especially the stuff about Ned, i know a few people have asked about him and so I've been trying to find a realistic reason why Ned wouldn't be in the story. So I hope this is okay? I did really really try with this chapter to make it good





## to be sure

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

I didn't sleep well but I didn't expect to. I wish I did. I felt myself wake up before I actually opened my eyes, it was while I was just laying there that I realized there was another presence in the bed next to me. Immediately I tensed, it took all my willpower not to jump up and get away from whoever was there. But I knew it would be better to pretend to sleep and give myself time to figure out what's happening rather than act rash.

Then it hit me. *Tony stayed.*

He said he would stay until I fell asleep, I guess he fell asleep too. But he actually *stayed*.

*He shouldn't have though. He shouldn't have needed to stay, it's my fault.*

I know I should just be happy that he's here with me, but I can't help but hate why he's here. It's not that I don't want him here, I don't want him to feel that he needs to be here or I'll die if he's gone. I want him to be here because he wants to be, not out of obligation or guilt.

*I gave him a way out yesterday. I gave him an out and he didn't take it, he said he still wants me. I-I don't understand. How could he want me?*

Part of me just wants to pretend that none of that really happened. To be sure, I slowly reached my hand down and ran my fingers over my thigh. Through my pants I could feel the bandaid underneath.

*It's real. It really happened. I actually relapsed. And had a panic attack. And I told Tony not to adopt me. In one day I ruined everything. Less than a day, in a few hours I threw away everything. Not just my clean streak, but being Spider-Man-there's no way he'll let me be Spider-Man now-and I destroyed Tony's trust.*

*I broke his trust.*

Once again that thought makes me want to...nevermind.

*He thought I was going to kill myself. I didn't, I cut. Again. If I was with May still and she found out, she...oh god that would be the worst thing that could happen. She would cry and be so so mad and she would make me take my clothes off again and-*

*Wait. Will Tony make me take my clothes off to check me? He didn't yesterday but he still could. I ruined this too. Here, Upstate, this is supposed to be my safe place. And I ruined it.*

I quickly covered my mouth to make sure I didn't make any noise. Thankfully I actually succeeded in making myself quiet. I can't wake up Tony. But I couldn't keep myself from shaking.

I felt Tony shift in bed, forced myself as best I could to stop moving, to not even breathe. I felt him wrap an arm around me. I wanted nothing more than to just relish in his comfort but I can't. I can't wake him up, I can't let him hear me, I need to just stop. I know how I can make myself stop...

Yesterday it didn't work though. It only made me panic more. I can't risk giving myself another panic attack.

So I just layed there, my hand still clasped over my mouth.

I guess it didn't work. I felt the bed shift again, and heard a groan. *I woke him up.*

I tried to discreetly move my hand away from my mouth, pretending to sleep. If he asks, I can say I had a nightmare again...

I heard him move a bit before I felt his hand in my hair, him running his fingers through. It felt nice. Even now, I could feel a bit of the tenseness leaving my body. *I'm just glad I got myself to stop shaking before he noticed.*

I think he thought I was asleep, at least I hoped so, so I just layed there not wanting the moment to end. But I know eventually I'll need to get up and we'll have to talk...

I let it slip about Ned. He knows now, at least he knows something happened. I screwed it up again. As always.

The moment just can't last, if he hasn't figured it out already I need to 'wake up'. I shifted a bit, and rolled over to face him. *I need to just face him.*

I opened my eyes to see him...smiling? He had a soft smile on his face, he reached forward and brushed back the hair on my face.

"Hey Pete," he murmured as I closed my eyes again, taking in his comfort one last time. *I don't know what will happen next.* "You want breakfast?"

I shrugged, already knowing it would not end well if I tried to eat, but I can't just disappoint him again.

I don't understand why he's so calm and being so nice. I don't deserve it, I scared him half to death yesterday. I don't understand.

"Okay kid, how about I make some pancakes while you get ready for the day?" He sat up as he spoke, already getting ready to get up. I just hummed in response, not really a yes, but not a no either. I'm not ready to speak yet.

I felt the bed shift and I heard him walk across the room. He paused for a second before he exited. I listened as far as I could, hearing him go to his own room to get ready. With that I sat up.

...

Upon walking into his room Tony sat down at the nearest chair, putting his head into his hands. He took a moment just to breathe to try to calm his nerves.

"Boss, your blood pressure is elevated, would you like me to contact Doctor Banner?" Friday asked.

"No, no I'm fine," he responded tiredly. Crazy how the phrase he's trying to get Peter to stop saying is his excuse too. That was when he decided to just get up and be productive. He did say he would make Peter breakfast after all. Though Tony's not foolish enough to not know that the kid might not eat it, but just having the option to eat is enough.

He took a quick shower, figuring Peter would need some time to collect his thoughts and mentally prepare to talk about the day prior. After getting out and throwing on an old band t-shirt and jeans, he made his way to the kitchen. Peter still wasn't there yet, but that was expected.

Though Tony is not known to be the best cook, he still tries. Often the team jokes that he'll burn the compound down, but no one will say no to some home cooked food. It does help though that he's been cooking more often for Peter.

The batter was quick and before he knew it he had the pancakes on the pan. Still no Peter.

He took those quiet moments to collect his own thoughts. So *so* much happened the day before, so much was said. Just the thought of everything that went down made his heart skip a beat.

Finally letting everything hit him he needed to stop for a moment, he quickly gripped the countertop to physically ground himself, "god..." he muttered. He took a few deep breaths in, forcing himself to try to calm down, "god, how am I going to do this?"

He glanced up, just to be sure Peter didn't happen to be standing there as he tried to fight off his own panic. Still no Peter.

After he felt his heartbeat fall to a more healthy pace he continued the pancakes, taking off the ones that got slightly burnt in that moment of panic, replacing them with fresh batter.

Once taking those off the pan he told Friday, "Fri, tell Peter there's pancakes ready." He didn't mean to rush the kid, but he also knew the longer they drew it out the more panicked they both will be.

It was a few more minutes before Peter shuffled down the hall freshly showered, yet still looking just as exhausted as the day before. Tony flipped the pancakes and greeted his kid, "Hey Pete."

"Hi," he yawned, sitting down on barstool at the counter. "Did you sleep okay?"

Of course the kid be concerned about Tony, after everything.

“Yeah I slept well. Did you?” He tried hard to keep his voice casual, though knowing they both were filled with the anticipation and fear of the inevitable conversation to come.

He nodded, watching his dad make the food. Neither knew what else to say, so Tony took off that batch and handed the kid a plate. He didn’t say anything when Peter only took one pancake. Once he sat down next to him Peter started to cut up his food. Tony also took one pancake to match the kid, hoping that would help him not feel so bad about eating less.

Tony didn’t say anything when his kid just shifted the food around the plate rather than taking a bite. He didn’t blame him.

...

*God god I’m so stupid he’s probably pissed at me god...*

I didn’t even try to retort my screaming thoughts, knowing they’re right.

*He’s gonna get rid of me. I straight up told him to get rid of me! I’m so so stupid...but this, this is best right? He-now he can stop being hurt by me.*

*But I’ll still be hurt...*

*Better than him though. It’s better for me to be the one hurt, not him. Not him. Never him.*

I didn’t dare take a bite of breakfast, knowing it would only make me feel more sick. Guilt didn’t grip me any less though.

*I need to just say something, I can’t just sit here waiting any longer.*

“I’m sorry,” *I know I’m not supposed to apologize but I am so so sorry.*

“Kid,” he sighed.

“I know, I know. I’m sor-” I snapped my mouth shut before I could disobey him twice in ten seconds. “Yesterday...yesterday was a mess, it shouldn’t have happened.”

I placed my fork down, knowing if I kept holding it I would probably accidentally snap it in half.

“I’m not mad.” *I don’t understand.*

“I am,” my voice cracked. “I’m mad at me, no no I’m *pissed*, I screwed everything up again.”

I didn’t realize what was happening when Tony reached forward and grabbed my hand. It was only then I noticed that I was scratching my wrist, pretty deep too.

“I didn’t mean to,” I whispered. *God I swear I didn’t mean to do that, not in front of Tony. It’s so natural I didn’t notice I didn’t mean to I didn’t.*

“Hey,” his voice was shockingly calm, “Hey, I’m here. I’m not leaving, and I’m *not* getting rid of you. Pete, look at me,” he waited until I made eye contact, though I quickly looked back down he continued, “I’m not mad at you. I’m not disappointed. I just want to talk about what happened.”

“I’m sorry...” *I can’t help it.*

“I know,” he pulled me into a hug. He mumbled something about moving to the couch, and with that he sat us there so it would be more comfortable.

*I’m so pathetic. I can’t get through one conversation without needing him to comfort me, what is wrong with me?*

“You okay to keep talking?” He asked once my breathing evened out. I nodded into his chest. He didn’t let me go. “Yesterday...a lot happened.” *That’s one way to put it.* “Before you fell asleep you mentioned Ned. You haven’t talked about him in a long time, I think since before everything happened. Yet you said you’re hurting him?”

Even though I knew he would ask I still wasn't prepared.

"Yeah..." I mumbled, trying to come up with a real answer. *Can I just tell him the truth? I don't want to make him more upset or disappointed.*

*I've disappointed him so much already though...*

"What happened with him?" His voice was almost careful, like he didn't want to set me off again. I want to say that he doesn't need to be so hesitant but with how often I cry he's probably right.

"I screwed it up," I answered simply, knowing it was vague, but I just can't figure out how to word it. How can I just say that Ned found out and I begged him to stay quiet then ran away? That I put so so much weight on him then just ran? How am I supposed to tell Tony that I shoved away my best friend to protect him from me hurting him?

*That's what I was trying to do yesterday. I told Tony not to adopt me in order to protect him.*

I continued, "I needed to protect him, so I pushed him away. I put him at a safe distance."

It only took a second for him too to connect the pieces, "a safe distance from you. Like what you were saying yesterday." It wasn't a question.

"I hurt him." *I've accepted that. I've accepted that I hurt him. But I'm still so so mad at myself for it. If I wasn't so stupid-*

"You keep saying that but I don't know what you mean. I don't know what happened, kid," somehow he still has some patience left for me.

"I-he...I let something-something slip and he figured it out...and that was too much. I put too much weight on him. I had to stop putting weight on him, I had to try to take it away," I tried to explain without sounding completely idiotic and selfish.

“You stopped talking with him so that you wouldn’t put more weight on him?” He really is trying to understand.

“Yeah,” I waited to see how he would react.

He reacted with a question, “isn’t it on Ned to say when it’s too much weight? Isn’t that his responsibility to protect himself?”

I shook my head, he still doesn’t understand. “The thing is he *wouldn’t* say anything. I’m scared that he would say it’s okay but it would be hurting him. He assured me again and again that he was here, that he would listen, that he would stay. I would be stupid to believe him.”

“Do you think you’re stupid to believe me?”

*Yes.*

“I-I don’t know. I know with Ned, I know how selfless he is. He always put me first. It’s not a good thing. He shouldn’t be selfless. It’s not fair. It hurts him. He can’t just take all my burdens and pretend it’s not weighing him down. He can’t just say he’s okay when eventually he’ll realize just how much I’m hurting him, and he’ll see that it’s not worth it, and he’ll leave,” then I realized another option, “Or he’d stay silent. He would take it all, say he’s okay, and he’d be destroyed. I would destroy him. And he’d just take it. Because that’s the selfless thing to do.”

“Do you think you’re being selfless for protecting him?” He’s asking so many questions.

“I’m just being a decent human being. I saw that I was hurting him so I stopped.” *But now I’m just hurting Tony. I need to stop. I made him cry yesterday and now I’m just putting more weight on him.*

*I made Tony cry.*

*I made Tony Stark cry.*

*That’s just what I do. I ruin everything I touch.*



“What did Ned do? After you stopped talking to him?” Why won’t he stop asking questions I can’t do this.

My voice was quieter this time. “He tried to talk to me several times. It lasted for weeks before he gave up.”

Ned has always been a persistent one, and when he really set his mind on something he wouldn’t change it. If I could make someone so determined, someone who cared about me that much, *I mean he had to have cared right? No one would stay that long if they didn’t care, right?* If I could get someone like that to leave, I can get anyone to leave.

“How did you feel after he gave up?” *Please stop asking questions.*

It took me a second before I could find the right answer, “I’m proud of him for putting himself first and moving on.”

“Oh kid...” *Did I say something wrong? I didn’t, right? I was trying to be so careful so he wouldn’t be even more disappointed in me, but I guess I screwed this up too.* “Pete I-” he was cut off by his phone ringing. I didn’t mean to flinch when the phone went off. Normally he ignores it but this time he opened it and read the text.

*But that’s okay, it’s important. I’m not the priority and I shouldn’t be. That’s not how this is supposed to work. He need to put what’s important first and that’s what he’s doing, it’s good.*

I sat up as he looked at his phone, but I couldn’t find it in me to actually move away from him.

“Peter, this is absolutely an important conversation and we will definitely be continuing it,” *he has to go, I should have known this wouldn’t have lasted,* “I was going to talk to you about this earlier but clearly that didn’t happen.” *Talk about what?* “My lawyers found a compromise with May. But I need to clear it with you. It’s completely up to you, if you don’t want to or are uncomfortable we can work around it.”

*I don’t understand,* “what compromise?”

He took a deep breath, “May said that she will sign custody over to me if she meets with you in person and if you tell her yourself that you want to stay with me.”

It took me a moment to organize my thoughts enough to even just come up with a response to that.

*I don't want to see her. Absolutely not.*

*But I need to, don't I? I don't really have a choice. This is the way to finally get Tony custody so I need to do it.*

*I'll probably panic but that's just something I'll have to deal with I guess.*

“I need to do it,” I decided.

“I knew you'd say that,” I couldn't actually tell what emotion he seemed to be feeling when he said that.

“When do I have to see her?” I asked, knowing any time would be too soon.

He hesitated, “she said she can meet tomorrow.” I didn't mean for my breath to catch in my throat. “But we can change the time, it doesn't need to be so soon.” *So soon after everything that happened yesterday.*

“No,” I heard myself say, “I need to get it over with.” *If I don't I'll just have more time to panic and worry,* “I need to go tomorrow.”

Maybe it was sympathy, or maybe regret in his eyes? “Are you sure?”

“Yes.”

*No.*

## Chapter End Notes

This chapter was harder to write than I expected it would be. It's always harder for me to write the aftermath of a panic attack than writing the actual attack.

I hope this didn't feel rushed, they definitely will be finishing their conversation but I did think I should not lose the plot going with the stuff with May. I quickly went through the last few chapters to be sure Tony didn't mention the 'compromise' to Peter already, I don't think he did. Right?

## to know what's normal

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

It was while Tony texted back his lawyer my answer that I really took in what I just agreed it. I just agreed to see May again. *I just agreed to see May.*

*She probably hates me. I hurt her like that, broke her trust, and just ran off to live with Tony. I made her cry. I made her upset and worried and now she's willing to give me up. Does this mean she officially gave up on me?*

*I know I want Tony to adopt me, absolutely, and I know it's selfish but I don't want her to give up on me. I know it's too much to ask but I wanted her to sign over custody because she knows that's best for me, because she cares about what I want, not because I upset her so much she wants me out of her life.*

My life with her had been...I mean I have no right to say it was bad. I am more blessed than I'll ever be able to even comprehend. Was it not normal, my life with May before everything? Ignoring the fact that my parents died and my aunt raised me, was it not normal?

Is it not normal to be terrified of parental figure? Is it not normal to be constantly worried about upsetting them? Is it not normal to barely be able to handle being in a room alone with them? To have a panic attack about it? To be scared every single day? To avoid talking about certain things to try to not upset them? To feel like no matter what I do I'll never do anything right, I'll never make them proud?

Is it not normal to think I deserve it? Everything that happened? To think I deserve to be hurt? That I still deserve to be hurt?

Is it not normal to think that maybe I'm the problem? That I just don't see reality and I'm just over sensitive and weak? That my opinions are never valid? That I can't actually say what I think without worrying about upsetting them? That every everything is my fault? Even if they hurt me it's still my fault, is that not normal?

Is it not normal to not feel like a real person? To feel like I'm just an object? That I have no human rights? To feel isolated and alone? Isn't it normal for them to be possessive and control what I do

and where I go? For them to prevent me from seeing other people I trust because they want me to talk to them instead? For me to have been paranoid all the time that they'll take my phone and go through it? For them to really take my phone and read every text and go through all my tabs?

Aren't these normal? Are these not just parent things?

I've looked up emotional abuse before, I've read about it and the signs. I think I'm more scared that this isn't, or wasn't, abuse than if it was. Because if it was, then nothing really changes, then I just know that there's a word for what she did. But if it wasn't...if it wasn't abuse then I'm the problem. Then I'm just over sensitive and weak and can't handle anything. Then I just made a big deal over nothing, over normal parent stuff. Then I hurt her because that's just how horrible I am. Then I left because I couldn't just be satisfied with the life she gave me.

*I don't want to have wasted all this. I don't want to have come to Tony for nothing. I don't want to think of her as abusive either... but I can't have it both ways, can I?*

It's not like she ever hit me, she never physically hurt me. Is it really abuse if she never physically did anything?

From the research I did, emotional abuse is just as bad and serious as physical abuse. But maybe she wasn't even abusive, it's probably just me looking for justification for my actions. It's probably just my fault. *Everything is always my fault.*

She loved me, didn't she? Why else would she have taken me in and raised me? She kept a roof over my head, she kept food on the table she bought me clothes. She made sure I had school supplies and a backpack, she even bought me toys and art materials. She didn't need to buy me toys when I was younger or art materials. It wasn't necessary but she still did, isn't that love?

*But aren't these normal parent things?*

When someone tells you 'I love you' is it normal to doubt it? To not feel it? To question and wonder if that's true.

I question why Tony would love me, but I do believe he's genuine when he says it.

I don't know why May would love me and all I've done is try to figure out if she's genuine or not.

Is that just a me thing? That it's my fault for not feeling her love?

And even if it was maybe possibly abuse then is it my fault for taking it? For not telling anyone?  
For not just leaving and running away?

Then again, I'm a minor. I don't have money or a job, and if I left I wouldn't have had anywhere to go.

Who am I to even say if it's abuse? It's not fair. It's not right. I'm probably wrong, I have to be wrong I'm always wrong. Ned said May loved me. Ned was almost always right. Tony said...well, doesn't Tony think it was abuse? Then again, he's just going off of what I said. If my reality is incorrect then what I told him was wrong. So really that's my fault too.

So I guess...it wasn't abuse. And if it wasn't abuse then how can Tony adopt me?

I looked up at Tony, I guess it was more complicated than just texting his lawyer that I agreed to the 'compromise'. I waited until he was done.

"I'm sorry about that Petey, I need to make sure everything is in order for tomorrow," he explained. *I'm really going to see her. After everything I need to face her again. Maybe this'll be the last time I see her.*

"It's okay," I responded automatically.

"Where did we leave off..." he mumbled to himself. *Ned.*

"I dunno..." I mumbled back, not actually sure if I was supposed to respond or not.

"Oh, *oh* kid..." that's totally not a terrifying way to start a conversation, "you're proud of Ned for leaving you?"

I don't know if he can understand, "I'm proud of him for choosing himself, that's how it's meant to be."

He took a second to think of how to word his next question, *too many questions*, “maybe I’m misinterpreting, but do you think you chose to do what you thought was best for him rather than what he thought was best for him?”

*That makes me sound selfish. It sounds like...I mean yeah, I just sound selfish and stupid and self-centered. Maybe he’s right...that makes sense.*

“Kid?” He asked when I didn’t respond. How am I even supposed to respond to that?

“Maybe you’re right,” I uttered.

*Will there ever be anything that isn’t my fault?*

“No, we’re not going to leave this like this,” he decided.

“What?” I asked, not meeting his eye.

“You are upset and I want to know why. We are not going to just sit here and pretend there’s no tension. I know I’m not very good with this whole... feelings thing, but I’m trying. I’m trying Pete,” he sounded so so tired at the end, but...but he’s not giving up yet.

“Thank you, for not giving up on me,” I didn’t know what else to say.

“Kid I’m never giving up on you,” he shifted me over so I was leaning against him again before continuing, “what did I say that upset you?”

“Nothing,” it came out more like a whine than I intended. I didn’t mean to whine.

There was almost a desperation to his tone, it didn’t sound right, “Nope, kid we can’t do this if we aren’t in communication. I can’t make you tell me and I won’t, but I don’t know how else to help you.”

*He's right, I think.*

"I just, it makes me sound selfish and self-centered. I was only trying to help him," I murmured.

He sighed, "I know. I know you were trying to help... kid that's his job though, to decide for himself what's too much. Just like it's my job to know what's too much for me. And you, Peter Parker, has never been and will never be too much."

"I'm sorry," my voice was barely audible.

"Why are you apologizing?" He asked, instead of reprimanding me, like I expected, for breaking his rule.

"I keep screwing up..." I answered.

I don't think he knew how to respond at first. "We'll get through this, okay?"

*God I hope so.*

We fell into a silence, not quite comfortable but not uncomfortable. We sat there, me soaking in everything that's been said, I let my eyes close for a moment exhaustion suddenly hitting me. I guess no matter how many days I go with little sleep I still end up so utterly tired.

He didn't say anything, but I think the conversation was over by now when he started running his hand up and down my back. My consciousness started to slip as I sat there, Tony by my side.

## Chapter End Notes

I hope this made sense. I'm finally getting my chapters to be a bit longer which is good  
I think



## to be a son

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

I miss when sleeping actually meant getting rest. I miss when the thought of sleeping didn't absolutely terrify me. Because why should I be able to sleep well when being awake is so hard? Why should I ever get a break? I don't. That's just how this works.

I didn't scream or cry or even move, like I would have expected. No. No, it was like I was paralyzed. I didn't even wake up with a jump or a gasp, I just quickly opened my eyes. A little too late than I would have wanted. But if I got what I wanted, I wouldn't have any nightmares to deal with.

I was only asleep for about an hour, since it's still daytime, yet exhaustion is gripping me even more than before. I know better than to let myself sleep. Now I not only have to deal with the after effects of what I told Tony, the fear of seeing May, but now the effects of my latest nightmare. I can't ever get a break...

"You awake, bud?" His voice was soft, fingers still carding through my hair. I just let out a hum, not yet ready to speak. "Today has already been...a lot. How about we just relax now, watch some movies?" I hummed again, hoping he knew that was a 'yes'.

It was shockingly easy to pick out the movie lineup for the day, though there are only so many happy Disney movies. Or at least mostly happy. *I have too many triggers we are trying to avoid.*

It was around lunchtime that members of the team started showing up. I actually let out a laugh upon seeing Bucky and Steve's reactions to seeing the movie we were watching. It was actually quite hilarious seeing the two of them race over and all but punch each other to get the open seat next to me. Part of me wonders if they really are such big Disney fans, or if they were just over dramatising themselves for my benefit.

Soon after that Natasha practically gave us all heart attacks when she snuck up on us. It was nice to see her laugh, even if she was laughing at us. I didn't mind.

I think everyone's commentary of the movie was more entertaining than anything happening on the screen. All the exclams of "what are you doing" and "it's so obvious" and "how could you be that dumb" brought a small smile to my face.

It was a few more minutes before another voice joined into the commentary, “oh I love this movie.” I didn't mean to tense at Pepper's voice.

“Hey hun,” Tony greeted. I listened to her heels clicking against the floor as she walked over to us. *How did I not hear her walk in the room?*

“Hi Tony, hello Peter,” she addressed us before giving Tony a quick peck on the cheek.

I didn't mean to shrink in on myself when she tried to talk to me. “Hi,” I whispered.

Based on the silence that followed I figured they were probably having a silent conversation, maybe with just their eyes or even mouthing. Without another word I heard her heels click out of the room.

“Where did she go?” I let the guilt choke me, I deserve it. *I caused her to leave. I hurt her before and now I'm doing it again. She didn't deserve it when I panicked and ran away after my last 'talk' with Sam. And she doesn't deserve this. Will I ever stop hurting everyone?*

“She has a lot of work to do, she was just stopping in to say hi.” I just couldn't bring myself to believe him.

I stayed there, curled in on myself. I faced the screen but I didn't really watch the movie. Or the next one. Or the next.

I guess it was a good thing? I mean it wasn't good, but it helped keep me from thinking of May. Eventually it was time to go to bed. I couldn't help but be terrified of the thought of sleep. But it's not like I can do anything about it so it doesn't even matter.

Even after wishing the Avengers a good night and getting ready for bed, sleep just refused to come.

So I laid there, and waited.

...

“Pep,” Tony called out once finding her in her office.

“Hi,” though she gave him a smile he could see the worry behind it.

He hopped up and sat on her desk, ignoring her eye roll, “Peter just went to bed. I thought we should talk about earlier, during the movie.”

She leaned back in her chair, “I didn’t mean to...upset him,” she worded her sentence carefully.

“I know,” he sighed, “I know. I really am not sure why he reacted like that.”

“I’ve been trying to figure it out too,” she confessed, “the last time me and him interacted was the last time he met with Sam.”

“And I wasn’t there for him,” he took a deep breath.

She took his hand, “you needed to work through everything with May. You two worked it out.”

“And now he-oh maybe he isn’t mad at you,” when her eyebrows raised he continued, “the kid, he feels guilty about, well everything, maybe he just feels guilty for running off and panicking while you were there.”

She considered it for a moment, “you think that could be a possibility?”

“I think so. The only way to really know is talk with him,” he huffed out a breath, “but tomorrow we meet May.”

“I know you won’t let her take him,” she assured him.

“There’s been setbacks, but he has been making progress. He’s been opening up more. I don’t want her to undo all the work we’ve done to make him better.”

She stood up, pulling him into a hug, “you’ll be there with him. If anything happens you can get him out of there. We will work this out.” She sounded so sure, so confident.

He nodded, hoping and praying to whatever god that may listen that she was right.

...

Once again I woke up from a nightmare. You know, I thought my nightmares wouldn’t get any scarier, but I was wrong. I’m always wrong.

Of course I woke up two hours before I needed to, with no chance of being able to fall back asleep. I just get to sit here and fight both the fear from the nightmare and the fear of seeing May again.

May is real. I’m really gonna see her. I really need to face her and *tell* her that I’m choosing Tony over her.

*I can’t do this. I can’t. There’s no way I am face her. I just can’t do that. I can’t tell her:*

*But I can’t get out of it. She said she’d give Tony custody if I told her. But she could be lying, she could just not sign the papers and there’s nothing we can do about it.*

*Tony wouldn’t let that happen though. He wouldn’t.*

I spoke before even thinking it over, “Friday, where’s Tony?”

“Boss is in his lab. Would you like me to call him up?”

Once again, I spoke without thinking, “yeah.”

*Why isn't Tony sleeping? Maybe he couldn't too, but Pepper is here wouldn't he want to be with her? I mean I know he doesn't have the best sleeping habits, but I thought he was starting to get better about it. Did I make it worse?*

It wasn't long before Tony was at my door, asking to come in. The second he walked in, though he tried to hide it, I could see just how *tired* he is. *I should have just left him alone.*

“What’s going on Pete? Why are you awake?” He sat down next to me on my bed.

“Nothing,” *he doesn't need this, he needs sleep, I shouldn't have reached out* , “are you tired?” I asked already knowing the answer.

“Kid, you asked me to come. First of all, I’m proud of you for reaching out, and second, I’m here because I want to be.” *That doesn't mean you're not tired.*

“I can’t sleep,” I murmured.

“Did you have a nightmare?” I did not mean for my eyes to shoot up so panicked. “I get nightmares too, that’s actually why I was up. It’s nothing to be ashamed of. Actually, all of us Avengers get nightmares, it comes with the job,” I didn’t miss the sadness slipping into his voice at the last sentence.

“It was scary,” *god I sound like a child.*

“I know bud, I know,” he pulled me into a hug, running his fingers through my hair. Who would have thought Tony Stark would become so normalized about physical comfort?

I didn’t fall back asleep, and neither did he. But he didn’t leave. Eventually it was time to get up and get ready. I didn’t even try to eat, knowing it would make me sick, and Tony didn’t try to force me any food.

It was too soon that we had to get in the car and drive down to see her. Tony mentioned that we are meeting her at some small café. I don’t know why we’re meeting there and I didn’t ask.

It's just me, Tony, and Happy in the car. Though Tony also said that Bucky would be there when we got back.

*Maybe I don't need to be alone.*

"I'll be with you the whole time," he assured me, as we entered the city.

"Won't that make her mad?" I questioned, already scared of the thought of an angry May.

"I don't care if she's mad, I care about you. If you want me there she won't stop me," his confidence was contagious. It helped take some of the tightness from my chest.

It was when Happy parked outside the café that my hands turned from a light trembling to really shaking.

"Happy, stay here and keep the car on," he told him before explaining to me, "if you need to leave, we'll leave. No questions asked, we'll drive away the second you need to, okay?" I nodded.

*I'm really doing this. I'm gonna face May.*

Tony walked next to me up to the door, his hand on my back helping to ground me.

The second we walked in the door she was there.

"Peter!" She exclaimed, not angry like I expected, but relieved? She was coming towards me, I didn't speak, I didn't move, I didn't breathe. Before she could get too close Tony stopped her.

He stepped in between us, "May, nice to see you," though he spoke pleasantries his voice was icy cold. May stood the furthest into the café, me right by the door, Tony inbetween.

Then came the anger as I expected, "oh so now I can't even hug *my* kid without you stopping me?!"

Tony glanced back at me, a silent question, I shook my head 'no' as subtly as I could, my eyes still open too wide. *I know if she touches me, I'll suffocate.*

"He's not yours," his voice stayed professionally even, but that didn't keep the coldness from his tone.

"Yes he is, he's coming home with me," I didn't think my eyes could open any wider. I couldn't speak, couldn't scream *no*.

"That's not up to you," he didn't raise his voice, but that didn't make him any less powerful.

She tried to come towards me again, but Tony kept himself between me and her, "I'm his guardian! You're the one that kidnapped him!" She accused.

*I don't want this, I can't do this. She's going to take me. I'm not strong enough to tell her no. I don't want to go with her. I want to stay with Tony.*

I couldn't get my words to come out.

"Peter, come with me," she commanded, "we are going home."

I didn't step towards or away from her.

But I did bring myself to shake my head. *Please don't make me go with her.*

"Peter..." she didn't yell that time, no it was small and broken. I watched the tears fill her eyes and roll down her cheeks. *I made her cry.*

Though guilt choked me, I know I still can't go with her. That's not what I want. I want to stay with Tony. I need to.

Even with tears on her face she reverted back to her anger, “Peter Benjamin Parker you are coming home with me.”

*I need to just say it, it's the only way. It's the only way out. This, this, is my escape.*

“I-I want to stay with Tony,” though my voice was small I know she heard me based on her reaction. A mix of shock and anger and pain and sadness all crossed her face.

“You are coming with me,” she didn’t sound so commanding that time.

“I want Tony to have custody,” I told her again, proving that this is what I want. Once I said that, though she was protesting, Tony turned around and faced me, another silent question. This time I nodded. He turned me around and walked me back out the door, staying between me and May. I heard her screaming, I couldn't help myself from covering my ears. But I couldn't hear her coming after us. After me.

Tony got me into the car, and as promised Happy drove as soon as we sat down.

“You did it kid,” it was strange to hear pride in the man’s voice. “You did it.”

That was when my own tears came. I don’t even know why I cried. Whether it be from seeing May, making her cry, her yelling at me, the relief that it's over, or the happiness that maybe I get to stay with Tony.

He immediately pulled me into a tight hug, it’s easier to breathe in his embrace.

“It’s over?” I asked.

Relief filled his voice, “Yeah kid, it’s over.”

“I’m going to be your son?”

“Yeah Pete, you’re gonna officially be my son.”



Despite the tears, despite the fears, despite everything, I smiled.

## Chapter End Notes

(It is thanks to one of my friends for giving me the title to this chapter.)

I was going to have this out before Endgame was released, I even wrote out an entire draft for this chapter. It was about 3000 words, but it just wasn't right. It was so so forced and not what I wanted. It didn't go where I wanted it to, and that's not what I want for this story. So I figured waiting longer would be worth it rather than posting something I hate and am not proud of. And then I finally finished rewriting this thing when suddenly half of it was deleted, I'm not sure what happened. And I couldn't get it back. I don't know why only half was deleted, but it was infuriating nonetheless. So then after already having spent hours on it I had to rewrite more. The part that got deleted was originally more detailed and longer and just better, but this is all I got at this point. I'm not saying this chapter is great, or even good, but it's closer to what I want to establish. I didn't actually reread it all so hopefully it's okay?

I did see Endgame (don't worry I won't spoil it) and I absolutely loved it. Though I do have like 30 new fic ideas for it now. I really do want to try out some of those ideas, but I also feel like I need to keep this story a priority. So I dunno. Maybe I'll write some, I just need to make sure I don't take on too much and overwhelm myself again.

## to be resilient

Of course it wasn't quite as simple as May signing the papers and suddenly Peter is a Stark now, but it definitely accelerated the process. Plus, Tony had lawyers to deal with the rest anyway. But however you put it, Peter did it, he told May, and Tony could not be prouder. You'd think he'd hurt himself from smiling so much.

Not even Tony Stark, a man who is never at a loss for words, could think of anything that could express just how proud he is of his kid.

...

I am mad at May.

For everything she's said and done. Yesterday, that was how I could fight back. By showing her that she can't hurt me anymore.

*But the thing is, she can. It still hurts.*

I want to seem stronger than I feel. I want to seem more confident than I am. I want to seem more self-assured than I've ever been. Because the truth is, I'm not, I'm weak and terrified but I don't want her to see that. That would be like she won.

Except this isn't a game. We are real people with real emotions. And the truth is both of us are hurt. But all I can do is try to protect myself and try not to hurt her any further.

I want to let myself be angry though. Part of me wishes I had said everything I wanted to say to her. I wanted to scream. To tell her everything I can't let go of, all the ways she's hurt me. Part of me wanted to hurt her back. To make it even.

I'm glad I didn't. It's not right for me to hurt her anymore than I already did.

I know it was stupid, I know it was my fault. But you know what? No one can hate me as much as I hate myself. No one can hurt me as much as I hurt myself. There are few things people have told

me that I aren't already told myself, at least insult wise.

I know I'm stupid. *I tell myself that every day.* I know I screw up. *I ruin everything.* I know I'm childish. *I just need to grow up.* I know I'm immature. *I need to think before I speak.* I know I'm weak. *I know I'll never be strong.* I know I talk too much. *I just need to shut up.* I know I'm an attention seeker. *I should just stay invisible.* I know I'm a mistake. *I just need to stop.* I know no one really cares. *They have no reason to.* I know everyone will leave eventually. *They have the right to.*

But you know what? No, I will not try to offend you. Yes, you can hurt me. You can. No matter how much I've been hurt I can keep getting hurt, that's one of my weaknesses. But maybe it means I'm still feeling.

I will not try to hurt you back. Why? Because I'm trying to have self-control. Because no matter how much you may hurt me that does not mean I have any right to hurt you back.

Believe me, I'm pissed. You may see me angry, you may see me really mad, but I know how to hide how pissed I am. I know better than to let myself show everything. Because if I did, well I would destroy everything that's left. I try to *not* be mean, because no matter how hard I want to retaliate, I know better. I know what it's like to hurt and I don't want to cause anyone else that kind of pain.

Maybe your actions or words make it seem like you deserve for me to fight back, but you know what? You are a human being. So am I. And humans don't deserve to be hurt. I will try to not hurt you because I want to be the bigger person. Even if I'm terrified and self-conscious and pissed, I know better. I'm trying to be better.

People have said before that they've never seen me fight back, be angry, retaliate. Is that something to be proud of? That I have enough self-control to not act rashly and hurt people?

I do try to fight back, but not with yelling and screaming and insults. No, that's the easy way, and it's not the right way. I try to stay calmer, or at least seem calmer, I try to choose my words more carefully. To explain my side, explain my hurt, say my feelings, rather than hurt you back. I know I'm not hurting you, at least not as much as you hurt me. *I hope.* That's the point, I'm not *trying* to hurt you. I'm *trying* to get my point across without causing harm.

And yeah, I'm sick of taking it. I'm tired of everything thrown at me. But I need to keep holding back. Because if I let myself, I can do a lot more damage than anyone would see coming. Anyone but me. I know I'm angry. I hold more anger than anyone would ever expect. But I push it down,

and I let it out quietly. So that you can't see how much is there. I don't know if it's strength or weakness, but all I know is *I don't want to hurt anyone*.

Sometimes I do though. I want to scream. I want to fight back. Scream every word I bite back. Yell every thought I keep to myself. Truly show the fire *burning* inside me. But I don't. I don't do it. Because in the end, everyone is hurting. I don't need to add onto that. I do not want to be the reason someone cries. I do not want to be the reason someone is pushed over the edge. I do not want to add any weight to anyone else. They don't deserve that.

It's hard, it *hurts*. It would be so much easier to just let myself be angry. But like a fire, it would burn everything it touches, and I wouldn't be able to stop it. I would just watch everything around me turn to ash. The bad and the good. I can't risk destroying what little good I have left. I can't risk harming those few people who haven't left yet

I'm not saying I don't hurt people. I know, *I know* I hurt people. I do way too often. I could never repay the damage I've done. I'm trying so *so* hard to stop causing people more pain. I'm failing, but I'm still trying.

Sometimes I do let my anger show, I try to cut it off as quickly as I can.

You want me to be angry? You don't know what you're getting yourself into. And so I shouldn't. I'm going to try not to. Because I think that's the right thing to do.

I wish I could be resilient, brush it all off and say it doesn't matter. It does matter though, to me. Because words hurt. Like knives tearing me apart piece by piece and I don't want those cuts. I soak it all in. Every every word, I let in and I can't let it go. It just simmers in me, *burning* me from the inside out. But I don't let it out. No, I just let myself burn. Because it protects everyone else.

## a real family

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

By the time we got home I was ready to just pass out, hoping my utter exhaustion was enough to keep me from nightmares.

Though even after something like that, my thoughts during the car ride were just way too loud, it still did not take away the fact that Tony was looking at me, smiling, with *pride* in his eyes. Who would have thought Tony could look so proud of me?

And he was right, the second we walked in the door Bucky was right there. I think he could tell by the smile still on Tony's face and the relief on mine that we got it done. With a look at me I nodded and with that he pulled me into a hug.

"How'd it go?" I pulled back from the hug to see Steve walk up behind us.

"He did it," you could hear the satisfaction in Tony's voice.

"That's amazing," Steve smiled so big and put a hand on my shoulder.

It's strange, so many people actually being proud of me. No one's ever proud of me. It felt like May never was. I know Tony has said he is before, but this, this is like a whole new level. I want to say it was nothing, that it's not a big deal, that I don't deserve it. Maybe I don't, but not even my mind can refute just how *hard* it was to face May, to tell her that I want to stay with Tony. I didn't think I would be able to do it.

*Maybe that's why it could be okay to just be happy right now, that I got through it and that finally people are happy with me.*

"I think we need some celebratory ice cream," Tony announced, leading the way to the kitchen.

I hadn't even thought of food since before we left to see May. *Maybe a little bit would be okay? Maybe?*

Part of me just wants to relish in the 'celebration' but there's always that part of me that just needs to doubt everything.

Steve helped Tony raid the freezer while Bucky sat down with me at the couches. I didn't even know we just had ice cream here, then again I don't really go exploring the food options.

They placed a row of full ice cream tubs on the coffee table before me, saying I should pick a flavor. I just picked the chocolate as it was right in front of me.

When Tony handed me the whole tub with a spoon I asked, "aren't we putting it in a bowl?"

He chuckled, "Kid, it's a victory just eat as much as you want, we can put your name on the tub after so no one eats it."

"You mean so Clint doesn't eat it," Steve joked. *It's nice hearing them joke.*

Wait, wait *Clint. I haven't met him yet.*

*But wasn't he on Steve's side in the airport? Then again, I didn't really interact with him so maybe he doesn't hate me? Maybe?*

*It doesn't matter anyway, it's not like I'll probably meet him if I haven't even seen him all the time I've been living here.*

Looking around, I noticed the other three already digging into their ice cream. *Maybe just a little bit is okay. I didn't eat anything else yet today so these are my only calories.*

I quietly stabbed my spoon into the dessert, taking a small bite. Part of me hates just how good it tastes.

"You did it," I shouldn't have even been surprised that Natasha snuck up on us again. When she said it, she smiled at me.

It was almost as if Tony and Steve knew she would show up, as there was an extra ice cream on the table. She snatched it up and joined us on the couches.

“What happened while you were there?” She asked, I guess that was the question everyone wanted answered, as each they took a break from their dessert to wait for my response.

“She was mad,” I said. *I hate how small my voice is, even after it's over.*

“Yeah?” Steve asked, gently pressing me to continue.

“She yelled a lot,” I put my spoon down, but kept my eyes on my ice cream, “she told me to go with her. I told her that I want to stay with Tony. And I do, I want to stay here,” it was at the last part that I looked up at all of them.

“And we want you here,” Bucky told me, to which every other person in the room nodded in agreement.

*I never even thought Tony would want me. But them...they all want me too?*

I smiled, small but genuine. I took another bite.

“Hey, Peter, Tony you're back,” it was Sam that walked into the room. *Do they all know what happened today?* I can't really bring myself to mind though. No, actually the thought that Tony thought this was important enough to inform the team, *that* is meaningful.

“Yep,” Tony popped the ‘p’, “Kid was great.”

“I'm so happy for you, you did it,” Sam smiled at me.

It feels kind of strange everyone saying that ‘I did it’, that it was a victory, a cause for celebration. That telling the woman who raised me that I don't want to stay with her anymore is a good thing. *But I think it is. Because I can't stay there, and I finally did something about it.*

“Anymore ice cream?” He asked before making his way to the freezer and getting himself his own carton.

I noticed myself repeatedly peering over into Tony and Bucky’s ice cream tubs. I know I shouldn’t compare how much I’ve eaten to them but I can’t help him. *I can’t eat too much.*

Though Tony had already eaten a third of his, and Bucky was almost done with his own, the small indent in mine just looked like too much. I know in reality I only had a few spoonfuls but is that too much?

“Pete, if it’s okay Pepper would like to come join us,” Tony said.

I nodded, “yeah of course.”

Though guilt still holds me tight.

He looked like he wanted to say something but he didn’t, he just got up and got a second spoon. It only took a few minutes and a few more small spoonfuls of my dessert for Pepper to arrive.

“Peter, I’m so proud of you,” she said the second she walked in. She looked almost as if she wanted to hug me, but she settled for a pat on my shoulder before sitting between Tony and Bucky. Tony handed her the second spoon he got and she took a few bites of his ice cream.

*So many people all here together..for me, it..it almost feels like a family. A real family.*

## Chapter End Notes

It’s really hard for me to write even somewhat happyish chapters but I’m trying



## to learn to talk

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“Hey Petey?” Tony got my attention. It’s not like I was really doing anything, I was just drawing. I quickly closed my notebook, not quite ready for anyone to see it yet.

“Yeah?” I watched as he came around the couch and sat next to me.

*Did I do something? Did he find out something? I haven’t done anything, I don’t think. I haven’t even cut since that day I ran out. Is he mad? Maybe-maybe he changed his mind about wanting me and now and now it’s over and he doesn’t want me. Why would he ever ever want me? I-*

“Hey, hey it’s okay. You’re not in trouble,” he put his hands on my shoulders, trying to ground me.

*I hate the snake. I hate how it chokes me, steals my air, hurts me even when I’m already hurt. I won’t ever let me go. I want it to go.*

“I just wanted to ask you about something,” he continued, “the other day, before we saw May, you seemed really tense when Pepper came in the room. I just want to know if something happened, or if you are uncomfortable with her or...?”

*Oh god.*

*I didn’t mean for him to notice that. Pepper’s important, she’s his fiancé and now I’m making him think I don’t like her. What happens if he thinks I don’t like his fiancé?*

“It’s nothing,” *please just drop it.*

He sighed, *I disappointed him*, “Kid, I can’t help you if I don’t know what’s wrong. I’m not mad, I just want to know so I can try to help.”

*He’s mad, how could he not be? He’s just saying that so I don’t panic. I’d be mad too, I don’t*

*blame him.*

“I like Pepper, she’s really nice,” it’s true, she is a wonderful woman.

*That’s not what he wanted to hear.* “Kiddo, I’m not saying you don’t like her,” he took a second to collect his thoughts, “I’ve come to know you a lot better since you’ve been living here, and I think I’ve gotten a pretty good idea how your mind works. So I do have an idea on what’s going on. Stop me if I’m wrong.”

He waited for me to nod before continuing, “the last time you really interacted with Pepper was your last talk with Sam, when I wasn’t there. None of us blame you for panicking, but I think you blame yourself,” *am I this obvious?* “I think that maybe since you panicked when Pepper was there you think she’s upset with you, that you hurt her.” *But I did hurt her. I hurt everyone.*

The snake was holding me *so tight* I could hardly breathe.

*Sometimes I want to kill the snake.*

Before I could think of a response he kept talking, “Peter you did not hurt her. She is not mad at you. She is not upset. She is just worried, she wants to have a relationship with you but only if you want one.”

“I want to have a relationship with her too.” *How could I ever have one though?*

“Was anything I said wrong?” He asked.

“No,” it came out quieter than I expected.

He gave me a sad smile, I don’t like those kinds of smiles, “do you think we can talk to Pepper? I’m sure she’d love to get this all figured out.”

“Sure.”

*Would he be angry if he knew the only reason I said yes was to not disappoint him?*

With that he led me down to a part of the compound I've never been in. It was more lavish than homey like the parts I'm usually in. It looked almost too professional for Tony's taste. At the end of the hall was a wall of windows looking into a large office. In the back, a big desk with Pepper sitting at it.

I guess this is where she works when she's not out at meetings.

He barely bothered knocking before barging in. She didn't even look surprised to see him. She did though, seem surprised to see me following behind him.

"Hello Miss Potts," he smiled at her. It's still kind of strange to see this side of him. But it's nice.

"Hello Tony, to what do I owe the pleasure?" She smiled at him.

"Actually this isn't about me," he responded as he hopped on her desk, sitting amongst her piles of papers.

"Hi Pepper," I finally spoke up.

Her eyes softened when she looked at me, "Hi."

"Um, hey," *wow I repeated myself, what a great start* , "so me and Tony were talking. About the other day," *god is he really going to make me have to say it*, "before-um before May. And..." I looked up at Tony. *I can't do this.*

He seemed to get what I meant and took over, "we talked about how things seemed a bit tense between you two. We figured it was because of after the last talk with Sam, Petey here feels bad for panicking and running off while you were there."

"It wasn't your fault," I added on.

“Oh Peter, you don’t have to feel guilty, it’s not your fault for panicking,” she stood up and put a hand on my shoulder.

*I hope she’s right.*

And it’s not like I’d ever dare refute her.

It was then that she gave Tony *a look* and before I could even try to decipher it Tony already knew.

“Oh, kid. There was something else I wanted to ask you,” he actually seemed a bit nervous. It’s not often that Tony is ever *nervous* for anything. “Would you like to be a groomsman at my wedding?”

“Wait what?” I gaped at him.

He chuckled, “you know how I’m getting married? Yeah, and I need groomsman. I couldn’t think of a better one than you.”

“You want me?” *Can he really mean it?*

He seemed smiled at me, “of course I want you kid. What do you say?”

I smiled back, “Yes, of course.”

## Chapter End Notes

Well life has been a bit of a rollercoaster lately. A few days ago was a really really bad day. I locked myself in the bathroom and cried, only to still have a bad panic attack later that night. It was a mess.

But two days ago was a really really good day. The morning was bad, stuff with my parents, but then the rest of the day was actually really wonderful. I’m actually shocked that I managed to get through almost a whole good day without something bad happening.

And that day, I finally managed to tell my parents that I may not want to go to the university they want me to go to. Eleven people in my family, including both my brothers and my two sisters in laws, all went to this one university. It's a really good school, I love the atmosphere, I think I could do well there. But I have never been excited about going there, it's always just been something I know I have to do. It's always been very clear to me that that's the school I'm supposed to go to, that that's what my parents want. They've said that if I want to go to a different school that it's okay but it never felt like it.

The only other school I really know is this one in the city, I have a friend who goes there, and her sister (one of my closest friends) has been trying to convince me for years that I should go to that school, that I'd love it. And the other day she finally convinced me. And I did look into the majors and it looks a lot more like what I'm looking for. The school my parents want me to go to I've looked into a lot and it just doesn't have what I'm looking for with the options for majors and focuses. But this city school seems actually quite spot on with what I want.

One of the biggest things is that there's this study abroad program, my parents told me that I would be allowed to do one study abroad program in college (which is why I've never gone on a real school trip before, and why I've never really been outside the country). Both my brothers did study abroad programs but the ones they did, they really didn't seem right for me. But this one, in the city school, it has a class that I REALLY want to take and it's in Europe and Ireland. One of my biggest dreams is to explore Europe, also I'm a small percent Irish so going to Ireland would actually be extraordinary. I know I am so so lucky, more than I'll ever understand, that my parents may let me do any study abroad program, but they say that the one I want to go on is probably too much money. And it's during the summer and my mom doesn't want me to do that. I know college is in a couple years for me but I know I need to start looking into this stuff now so I don't get stuck with something I don't want. But maybe the biggest thing, is my close friend told me that if we went to the city college together we could be roommates. Roommates in the dorm and for the study abroad trip, she wants to go on the same one as me. And that, that would just be a dream come true. To go to a college with the major I want, to be roommates with one of my best friends, and to go to Europe. And I did tell my parents this. They were shocked but not completely closed minded. It doesn't seem like they'll let me to the study abroad trip, since it's too much money and in the summer, which is disappointing but not unexpected. Going to the actual college, my parents seem to be listening to me but they don't think I should go there. And I know better than to actually believe my friend would actually want to be my roommate. So it's like something really amazing could happen but it also can't. It's like one of those things that I know won't actually happen, but it's something nice to think about. A far off dream.

Sorry this is long. About the chapter, well it was hard to write only because I didn't know what to write about. I tried.

Also I am running out of ideas for chapter titles. One of my friends gave me some ideas but I still suck at making titles.

## a mom

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

*Tony Stark wants me to be one of his groomsmen. Tony. Stark. Wants me to be one of his groomsmen. Me.*

*Of all people he says that he couldn't think of anyone better. A man that knows Steve Rogers, Bucky Barnes, Thor, Colonel Rhodes, Clint Barton, and Bruce Banner thinks I should be in his wedding.*

Tony continued talking, interrupting my thoughts, "Rhodey is my best man," *that makes sense, it's right*, "The other groomsmen I have so far are Happy and Bruce."

I almost asked if any other avengers would be groomsmen, but thankfully I'm not that stupid.

"What about you Pepper? Who are your bridesmaids? If I may ask," I quickly added on the last part.

She smiled at me kindly, "of course you can ask. My maid of honor is Natasha. My bridesmaids, unless we add more groomsmen," she looked pointedly at Tony, "are Wanda, Maria, and Hope."

*Is it bad that I don't know who half those people are?*

I guess they saw my confusion and Tony explained, "we've known Maria a long time, she works with Nick Fury." *The Nick Fury? He's in charge of Shield, well I guess that makes sense since they worked with Shield.* "If you remember Ant-Man from the airport-"

I didn't mean to cut him off, "the little guy who turned super big?"

"Yeah, he works with Hope. She has a similar suit but she has wings, she's called The Wasp."

"She has wings," I couldn't keep my mind from trying to come up with all the possibilities that

wings could provide.

*But not like the Vulture, Hope must be different. Why else would Pepper have her as a bridesmaid?*

“You’ll love them Pete,” he decided.

I smiled, “they sound amazing.”

“They are,” Pepper agreed, “I’m still shocked everyone is able to make it. All the avengers are coming, along with many others Tony’s met along the way.”

*Everyone.*

*But that means I’ll have to talk to them, I’m not good at talking to people.*

*But with a whole wedding full of Avengers and other strong amazing people I’ll have to talk so much and I’ll screw it up and they’ll all hate me and-*

“Kid, hey, hey, what’s wrong?” He’s gotten better at seeing my panic before I get too far gone.

“Nothing,” I forced myself to take a breath. “I’m just excited for you two. Do you have a date?”

He didn’t look convinced but didn’t press the matter. Part of me was relieved that he let it drop, part of me wishes he didn’t. “Well, it’ll either be June or July, we still need to figure that out.”

*How long have they been planning this? Have I just been completely oblivious this entire time? I’m just that self-centered...*

“We’re still getting details together, we have general ideas for everything we just need to pull it all together,” though she sounded confident she looked a bit nervous. I can’t blame her it must be a lot of stress to have to run a company and try to plan a wedding.

*Is that my fault? Because Tony's helping me rather than helping her. He should be planning his wedding but instead he's worrying about me. That's not fair to him.*

*No, no I need to stop. I need to be happy, I have to be happy for them. This is their time, I can't ruin this too. I have to be happy.*

"I'm sure it'll all work out," I hope my smile was reassuring.

"It will," Tony agreed, "I think we need to let her keep working," he told me before turning back to his fiancé, "I'll see you later." After giving her a kiss on the cheek he led me out of the office.

While we walked back to the common area he spoke up again, "you sure you're okay?"

I nodded as I spoke, "yeah, yeah of course." I'm really not that convincing am I? I thought I got pretty good at making my smiles seem real, but he only seems to be getting better at figuring my real from my forced smiles. Is that a good thing?

"Bud, we talked about this, I can only help you if I know what's wrong." *I thought we dropped the subject.*

*It's not even a big deal, we still have time before the wedding I can worry about it later. It's my own fault anyway for being so scared to talk to people, Tony shouldn't be worrying about it.*

"It really is nothing, I'm just tired." *I've already put so much on him, especially recently, he doesn't need anymore.*

He needs to focus on Pepper, he's marrying her for a reason. I'm just the kid he's adopting, that doesn't mean I have the right to take his time away from Pepper.

*Wait.*

"Pete, what's wrong?" I didn't mean to stop walking, and I definitely didn't mean to worry him more.



“You’re adopting me, and you’re marrying Pepper,” I began, trying to think it through myself.

“Yeah?” Now there was as much confusion as there was concern on his face.

“So you’re gonna be my dad. Does...does that mean when you marry Pepper, that she-that she’ll be my mom?” My voice ended up quieter than I expected. Upon seeing his wide eyes and realizing the weight of my words, I tried to fix it, “nevermind, nevermind I’m sorry for misinterpreting it’s my fault nevermind.”

He stopped me before I could continue down the hall, “no kid, you’re not wrong. She will be your mom, is that what you want?”

*I really never thought about that, that not only could I get a dad but I could get a mom. May was like a mom, I think, but I didn’t like how that turned out. But Pepper is different. This will be different.*

*But she didn’t ask for this, for me.*

Instead of answering I asked, “Is that what she wants?”

“Yeah kid,” he smiled, “I talked with her about it, she not only encouraged me to adopt you but she wants you too.” *She wants me?* “If you want it, she could be your mom.”

*I could have a dad and a mom.*

## Chapter End Notes

Once again this is the second draft I’ve done for this chapter. The first one was a lot longer but also very sad and choppy and repetitive, so I figured trying to just restart and make a whole new chapter would be better. So this is what I have.

I’ve been putting a lot of thought into how I’ll end this story, and I have two ideas. I do have an idea for what I think could be a good ending, but I’d i do that it would mean this story could end in a month or two. I don’t know if that’s a good thing. The thought of ending this story isn’t quite as scary of a thought as it used to be, but I am

still scared to lose this. Though if I went with that there's high chance for me to have a sequel. My other idea would definitely extend the story and I don't know how long that would take or where it would end up. It would pretty much be my ideas for the sequel but just as a continuation instead of making a new fic for it. I see the benefits to both ways, but I don't know what I'll do yet. Either way I want to write my ideas for what comes after this story, I do have a lot of ideas, but I don't know the best way to go about that. I think my idea of how to end it would be a nice and appropriate ending spot, but then I'd have the sequel anyway so I don't know if that's worth it when I'm continuing the story anyway. Thoughts on that would be much appreciated guys. I hope that all made sense. I still have time but I am trying to figure that out. Also, I saw the new Far From Home trailer and OH MY WORD

## to make a list

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Sometime I wonder if Tony thinks I'm selfish. I know I am. I'm selfish and self-centered and ruinous and I hate it, *god I hate it.*

Yet it's always the selfish part of me that wins, that part of me which so desperately needs to talk to people. I should be able to do this on my own. Right?

It's always that selfish part of me that ruins everything.

*Sometimes I wonder if I wasn't so selfish if I would still be able to be friends with Ned.*

*Sometimes I want to kill that selfish part of me. Murder it. Cut it out of me piece by piece. Even if it's just a hole left...it's better than my ruinous selfishness.*

I'm still running in circles. No matter what I do I end up in the same pattern. I say I'm going to stop, I try to stop, I'm trying so hard, but it's just the same cycle. It's always the same cycle. I'm still trapped. I'm tired of being trapped. I don't think I ever will find my way out.

*Well there's one way.*

But Tony won't let me. He'll never let me.

*Maybe May would.*

No, no, she wouldn't. It's stupid to even think she could.

It's always the same insults that my mind provides, usually that I'm stupid. And I always believe it. But sometimes I wonder how someone so stupid could do the things I do. There must be a reason.

Even in days that are supposed to be good, my mind still never relents.

Maybe Tony could help...

*But it's always that selfish part of me that wins. If I talk to him it'll only make everything worse.*

*How can I kill a part of me? Sometimes I wonder if it's not just part of me, if I'm just a selfish person and that's why I always act like this. How can I destroy it if it's all of me?*

Today was supposed to be a good day, I thought it was. And my mind ruined it, it ruins everything. Well everything that I don't already ruin by just being me. I need to be happy. I'm supposed to be happy. I want to. I want to be happy happy happy happy *happy happy happy happy happy*...

*I'm not happy.*

But I'm supposed to be.

I need to be happy *happy happy happy*...

*Well that's not the only thing I need, but I can't do that anymore.*

It makes me want to do it more, not having the option. When I lived with May, I used to have these moments, I used to think they were moments of strength, were I would decide to stop. I would throw out my blade. But knowing I didn't have the option, knowing I couldn't do it only made me spiral. I knew I needed it so I would always find a new one. Eventually I stopped throwing them out, keeping them even if I didn't cut, just to know I had the option.

I can't blame Tony for trying to stop me, he wants me to be safe. But how can I explain that I need the option? That being able to do it makes me less desperate to actually do it? I can't tell him that. I can't be that selfish.

I've always been selfish. I used to keep a list of all the ways I was burdening May. It was a long list. I would write down every single thing I was wasting her money on. That's one thing I don't have to worry about here, or at least not as much. It's harder to waste a billionaires money.

May would tell me almost every day how I'm wasting her money, as if I needed a reminder at how much of a burden I am.

I should have known better than to ask to go out with Ned on the weekends, I should have not gone if I didn't have my own money. I should have known better than to ask again the next week, we didn't have the money for that. I shouldn't have asked for more pencils, I was fine with one. I shouldn't have asked for new paper, I could have scribbled in the corners. I shouldn't have asked for food for breakfast, I didn't need to eat in the morning. I shouldn't have said when I was out of lunch money, I only needed one meal a day. I shouldn't have asked for a fish, I didn't need a pet. I shouldn't have asked for juice, water was fine. I shouldn't have asked for a book, I could have walked to the library. I shouldn't have asked for a therapist, I know now it doesn't help me. I should have just gotten a job, then maybe I could have started paying for myself. I shouldn't have spoken up, I know better than to speak.

I need to stop being selfish, I'm too much of a burden already.

Sometimes I wonder if a funeral and burial would be less money than keeping me alive. Sometimes I think the cost of the funeral would be worth it. Then again, how many people would actually show up?

I had a list for that too, a list of people who I thought might actually care if I died. The saddest part wasn't that I felt the need to make that list, or that it was very short, but it was when I started crossing names off because I realized they probably wouldn't care after all.

The list used to be Tony, Ned, Happy, and MJ.

The second I had wrote Happy's name I had scribbled it back out. It was soon after that that I crossed MJ's name out. I stopped bothering her even before I stopped bothering Ned. I never expected her to make much of an effort to talk to me after I stopped talking to her, but she did for a little while before she gave up too. After I stopped talking to Ned I crossed his name out too.

I never wrote May's name.

I don't remember if I ever crossed Tony's name out, I'm not sure if I should have.

Maybe it was the realistic part of me that scribbled the names out, or maybe the hopeless part. But

aren't they the same thing?

*I'm supposed to be happy right now. But I'm not.*

*I'm happy for Tony and Pepper, of course. I'm happy he wants me to be a groomsman.*

*But I'm not happy. I don't make any sense, I never do.*

Today was supposed to be a good day. I wanted it to be. I should have known better than to actually think I could have a good day. I'm running in circles and good days aren't part of that cycle, they don't belong.

Sometimes I want to smash my head on the floor if that means that my mind would be quiet for even a moment. It's a very convincing idea, but I'm yet to do it. I guess I'm too scared.

I can't tell Tony that either. Either he would freak out or just dismiss me, saying I would never do such a thing. Maybe I wouldn't, I probably wouldn't. But then again, I've surprised even myself with how far I'll go to calm down and quiet my mind.

It seems like the only way my mind will shut up is when I'm in physical pain. It's worth it. No physical pain could ever compare to what my mind puts me through.

*Is it my fault? That my mind hurts me so much? May seemed to think it was my fault...*

I shouldn't need Tony as much as I do. Yet part of me wants to just let myself need him, need the support and comfort and having someone here for me. Is that selfish?

I want to know what's true, what's real. Because whenever I think something's true someone always says it's not. *Maybe I need a new list.*

After the conversation with Tony and Pepper earlier today I had decided to come to my room to try to process, maybe that was a mistake.

I went over to the desk and grabbed my drawing notebook and a pencil. I turned to a blank page as I sat back down on my bed. I quickly drew three columns before labeling them: **Things I know are true**, **Things I want to be true**, and **Things I don't know if they are true or not**.

Then I got to writing.

**Things I know are true:**

- **I am messed up.**
- **I am ruinous.**
- **I am selfish.**
- **I talk too much.**
- **I made May give me up.**
- **Tony thinks he's going to stay.**
- **Uncle Ben's death was my fault.**
- **The ferry was my fault.**
- **I made Ned leave.**
- **I made MJ leave.**
- **I can't control my nightmares.**
- **I hurt people.**
- **My mind is too loud.**
- **I put too much weight on everyone.**
- **I'm weak.**
- **I cry too much.**
- **I hate myself.**

I wish I didn't have to hold back tears as I wrote the list. Though I did leave room for more if I thought of anything. I probably will.

**Things I want to be true:**

- **Tony loves me.**
- **Tony isn't going to leave me.**
- **I'm could be his son.**
- **Pepper wants me.**
- **She could be my mom.**
- **It's not my fault.**
- **There is a reason I am the way I am.**
- **There is a reason May acted the way she did.**
- **It is not my fault how May treated me.**

I'm sure there's more things I could list, but I couldn't bring myself to write more.

**Things I don't know if they are true or not:**

- **I have a mental illness.**
- **May was abusive.**
- **Tony loves me.**
- **The Avengers hate me.**
- **I would be better off gone.**

Once again, I couldn't bring myself to write more.



It's one thing to think these things, but actually seeing them written out, that makes them see more real.

It was a knock at the door that pulled me from my thoughts. Before answering I quickly stuffed my notebook under my pillow, asking who's at the door.

## Chapter End Notes

I decided to try something a bit different with this chapter. I hope it's okay?

I figured that since I used to write lists like that and sometimes still do, it would be interesting to have Peter do the same.

I probably won't be able to post again until after I'm out of school. Next week is my last week so after I'm out I should be able to write more

## a true promise

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“It’s Bucky,” he answered.

“Come in,” I called out. *Why would he be coming to my room?*

Of course it was only once he was entering my room that I glanced down to see my notebook peeking out from under my pillow. Because I’m just *that* smart.

*Would it be more obvious to cover it up or to just leave it and hope he doesn’t ask? Either way he’ll probably know it’s there, but maybe if I leave it alone he will too.*

“Can I sit down?” Was the first thing he asked. I can’t help but wonder if it’s just for politeness or something else.

“Sure?” I didn’t mean for it to come out as a question.

I waited for him to settle himself, a million possibilities of why he’s here racing through my head.

“Me and you haven’t really spent much time together recently, I wanted to see how you’re doing.” Though he seems genuine, could that really be it? Could he just be here just because...he cares? Maybe that belongs on my list too, of things I want to be true.

“I’m okay,” it’s just so natural to say, I didn’t even have to think about it.

He looked at me for a second before seeming to decide something, “how about we exclude some words from our vocabulary.”

“What?” Is this like with Tony? He doesn’t want me to say I’m fine anymore.

“Okay, fine, alright, words like that. They don’t say anything about how you’re really doing,” he looked so serious.

“That makes sense.” How else can I respond? It’s not like I can say no.

*I can’t ever say no. Even if I did no one would listen.*

He turned to face me better, “How are you actually doing?”

When Bucky talks with you, you can tell his full attention is on you. It’s as if I could I actually matter to him.

“I’m just tired,” again, a natural response.

*That wasn’t the answer he wanted.*

*What does he want me to say?*

*The truth, a small part of my mind supplied. But I can’t do that.*

“How about we take that one out too, tired is too common of an excuse. How about I go first, maybe that’ll be easier. Things are actually going pretty well, me and Steve haven’t had any fights recently, I haven’t had a panic attack in a few weeks, my nightmares aren’t as frequent. I can take some of your weight, okay? I have the room, you won’t hurt me.”

*He gets panic attacks and nightmares too?*

*What right do I have to add anymore weight to him? He’s clearly already dealing with enough, and even if he is in a good place right now that doesn’t mean I should risk ruining it.*

I decided it’s best not to press him for more information, I’m lucky enough he trusted me with that much.

“I am tired, I’m so exhausted, physically and mentally,” he nodded for me to continue, “I really am trying to get better. I’m trying *so* hard. Today, I thought today could be a good day but my mind ruined it again. I’m so stupid, I know I don’t get good days, I don’t deserve that. My mind keeps me in check.” *I said too much.*

But he didn’t look surprised, concerned yes, but not shocked or upset or angry like I expected.

“What do you do when you’re so exhausted?” I watched to see where his gaze went, to see where he’d look. He looked me in the eye. I let my own gaze drop though, keeping eye contact is hard during conversations like this.

Part of me expected him to look at the notebook, I can only assume he saw it sticking out from under my pillow, or to my arms or legs, even though they’re covered it could just be natural to look where the damage was done. But he didn’t look anywhere but my eyes, but at me.

I don’t necessarily want conversations like these to end either. Because if they end, then I lose Bucky too. I’m already losing Tony, and probably the possibility of Pepper too.

*I’m losing everyone again.*

That’s when I noticed Bucky stare. What even was his question?

“Sorry...” I mumbled.

He didn’t seem fazed, “what’s on your mind?”

“I’m scared,” I answered before realizing how stupid of a response it is.

Once again, he looked concerned but not surprised, “what are you scared about?”

“I’m going to lose Tony,” it wasn’t a question.

He nodded, “because of the wedding?”

It’s easier to talk to Bucky than even Sam.

“Yeah...” I pretending to not notice my own voice cracking, “once he’s married he’ll be gone. He’ll just be with Pepper, but that’s how it’s meant to be, it’s right.” Though I may have sounded accepting of this fact, even I can’t deny the intense force of the tears pressing against my eyes.

“You’re his kid, you won’t lose him.” *He doesn’t understand.*

“No, no you don’t get it,” I know I shouldn’t have said that, yet I kept talking, “everything will change. It’ll just be Tony and Pepper. And that’s great, I’m happy for him. Absolutely. But I’m also sad. And I know, *I know*, I have no right to be upset. But I’m still scared.”

“Scared to be without him?”

“Scared to be alone.” Again, I know I need to just shut up already, but that selfish part of me still wins, “I’ll be alone again. I know it won’t be the same as before, but this time...this time I know what I’m missing. And when Tony’s gone, I don’t really have anyone else left. I know you’ll leave too, I don’t know when but that’ll happen.”

He looked like he wanted to say something but I didn’t give him the chance, “I pushed everyone else away. Therapy isn’t even helping. When I was with May I used to think that if I could get a therapist maybe I could get better but now I know that not even a professional can help me. I just don’t get better, that’s not how this works.”

*Now I know, Tony is leaving goes under Things I know are true.*

I didn’t even take a full breath before I continued, it’s like Bucky caused my floodgates to open. *No don’t blame him it’s my fault.* I hadn’t even noticed my tears leaking from my eyes until now. I didn’t bother wiping them away.

“I-I’m terrified, so so terrified. When my Uncle Ben died when I was 14, that was the first time I was really alone. I had May, but that’s...complicated. I was 14 when I think I first got depression, I had all the signs. I know I won’t be with May again, but I’ll still be alone. But this time it’s like I can see Tony but he’s always out of reach. Before it was just a far off hope, a useless dream. Now I

know it could be possible for me to be Tony's son and to have a family and to be *happy*. But that's just not how this works..." I covered my mouth just as sob wracked my body, instinctively trying to quiet myself.

"Come here," Bucky whispered before pulled me into a hug.

"I'm scared," I cried into his chest. The more I hear about the wedding more scared I am, because that only makes it more real. It means it really is happening soon.

"I know, I know," he rubbed my back. "Listen to me okay?" I couldn't get any words out to respond but he continued anyway, "I promise you that the wedding will not make you lose Tony. And you are definitely not losing Pepper. Or me. You still have me and Steve and the rest of the team. I won't let you be alone."

For a moment, I didn't care how childish I sounded, "You promise?"

"I promise?"

Though I know that that's not a promise anyone can make, everyone leaves eventually, it was still comforting.

## Chapter End Notes

I've been talking to a few of my friends a lot about the upcoming weddings. Mostly about the sooner one as it is in like 7 weeks, and that's with my brother who I'm closer to. Though my other brother is getting married only three weeks after. For my (soon to be) sister in laws we are having a combined wedding shower soon and I'm making a lot of the decorations for it. And yeah I'm happy to help and it's fun, and I am excited about the wedding showers. But the more that happens and the more we talk about it all the more real it becomes. I don't need it to be any more real. I've already cried a lot. This week I was talking to two friends at youth group about how I'm scared for the wedding and I started crying in front of them. I usually don't cry in front of anyone. Last time I cried in front of someone (besides watching Endgame but that's different) was at the funeral of my family friend.

I feel like I'm wasting all the time I have left with my brother. And part of that is because I still don't completely trust him after he told me he never believed I had/have depression, and part of that is I just don't feel like I belong. I honestly do not want to be around my brother when our older brother is there, it doesn't end well for me they always just make fun of and criticize me. And I don't want to be around my parents

much either. So that alone cuts out a majority of the time my brother is still at our house. And with what's left he's always busy. So I just don't get any time with him. I know I'm rapidly running out of time yet here I am.

I'm so scared to not only lose my brothers but to be left alone with my parents again. Last time it was just me with them for a long period of time was when I was 14 and both my brothers were at college at the same time. That's the year I got depression. I know that once my brothers leave then it's over. Yeah I may see them for holidays, maybe a couple other occasions but I know how busy they both are. Once they leave, they aren't coming back. At least when they were in college I knew they were coming back. The brother I'm closer with, for a few months me and him used to call almost every week, but that was only after he found out about my cutting. Then our calls became less frequent and less frequent until we just stopped calling. I tried to text him multiple times but he never responded. I know that that's what will happen again, he'll be busier than ever. His life is moving on and I'm still stuck here. I'm getting left behind again. I'm scared for what will happen once they're gone. I have been making progress with my mental health, slow and small but still progress. I'm scared I'm going to lose it all again, that I'm going to go back to where I was when I first got depression. Yet there's nothing I can do about it.

And yeah I should I be working on school stuff but I figured I could get this out as it'll probably be a week before I can update again. I thought this was important to write.

## to fight the snake

### Chapter Notes

(tw mentions of self-harm)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Sometimes I want to kill the snake. But I don't know how. I can't cut it out of me, it's too deep. It doesn't drown. I don't even know if it can die. But I want to try.

I'm tired of suffocating. Of the constant pressure, of it's hold on me. I'm tired of it snapping me in half, cracking and breaking me apart. I want, I *need* to be able to breathe freely again.

Sometimes I wonder if medicine could kill it, but I also know that with my metabolism meds don't work on me.

Sometimes I wonder if I was better if the snake would just fade away. But maybe it's one of the things that keeps me from being better.

It wants me to die. I know that's true.

But I don't know if it's actually capable of killing me itself. Or if the snake is just trying to make me suffer so much that I do the job for it.

But I know one thing, I can't let it win. I can't give it the satisfaction.

Sometimes I wonder if I can ask someone if they know how to kill the snake, but they'll just think I'm insane.

I don't even know if I've mentioned the snake to anyone before, or if it's just something in my head.

*Maybe Wanda knows.*



Wanda was in my head, maybe she saw it?

If I ask, that could really backfire though. But I can't just keep on letting it hurt me either.

*How could I even ask? Like oh hey Wanda remember when you went in my head? Did you happen to see a snake trying to kill me? No? Well thanks, don't tell Tony.*

Yeah nope.

There are times that the snake sometimes quiets though. It's quieter when I'm in the shower and I turn the water a little too hot and don't bother making it cooler. It's quieter when I 'trip' and get a bruise or two. It would get quieter when I would go out as Spider-Man and the criminals got a few good shots on me. It's quieter when I cut.

*It likes when I'm in pain.*

But it never shuts up. It's always telling me horrible *horrible* things, sometimes whispers, sometimes screams but it's never silent. The only times it seems like it could be silent is when I cut. When I'm bleeding. When the metal quickly slices over my skin. When the red oozes out. When the sting hits me a few seconds after.

Though sometimes it feels almost silent when I'm with Tony or with Bucky. Mostly Tony.

I think the snake is Anxiety. And Anxiety wants me to die.

So does Depression. But I'm not sure what that is, what form it is in my mind.

I'm not sure if Dissociation wants me to die. I know it's balloons but balloons aren't bad.

I need something to stop them, the snake mostly, it's the most active at the moment. Always choking me, reminding me of its presence as if I could ever forget.

I need something that can break the snake, tear it apart, rip it piece by piece until it can't hurt me anymore. I need something strong, fierce, brave, resilient, but also nice for me. I need something like...like a tiger. It may be soft to my touch but that doesn't take away how sharp it's teeth are when it stabs it's fangs into the flesh of the evil snake.

I'm not sure if I have a tiger. If I have something to refute the thoughts always berating me, something to keep me from suffocating.

Tony tries, he tells me my thoughts are lies and he tries to help me breathe in and out with him *in and out*.

He's not in my head though. He doesn't know just how loud it is. No headphones can drown out the blaring screams of my mind. No matter how much pain I may be in it's never enough for the snake. *Never*.

Sometimes I wonder if everyone has a snake, or maybe just people like me, people whose minds try to kill them every second of every day. Or maybe it's just a me thing, maybe it's just one of those things.

I've thought about asking, but I don't think that's right. If they don't have a snake in their head they'll think I'm utterly insane, and if they do...well that's too personal of a question to ask.

I need to figure out how to get a tiger, how to get it to protect me. Because if I have one, I don't think it's protecting me. The thoughts aren't any quieter and the ideas it suggests to me are still too tempting.

Maybe I do have one, and maybe it is trying to protect me. And maybe it's just too overwhelmed. I don't know how to help it though. In one of our 'talks' Sam told me that I need to try to refute the thoughts. That I don't have to believe it yet, it doesn't even have to be something good about me that I say back.

It's really hard though. Because honestly I do believe the snake, so really it just feels like I'm feeding myself lies. Even if it's something neutral about me that I'm trying to refute the thoughts with it still feels like a lie. I don't know how I can ever believe it if I'm just lying to myself.

Tony says they aren't lies though. That I'm not stupid, that I'm not useless, or worthless, or pathetic, or weak, broken, or a monster. *I think it makes him sad that I think these things about*

*myself. I don't want to make Tony sad anymore.*

I am trying though. It's hard and slow. It's a never ending war and I lose a lot of the battles. But I'm trying. *So hard.* Even if no one sees it, I'm still trying.

Sometimes I wonder why I'm trying, after everything. And sometimes I don't know why. Maybe it's for Tony, to not disappoint him. Maybe it's for Sam, so he doesn't think he failed me. Maybe it's for May, to show that after everything I'm not broken. Maybe it's for Bucky, to make him proud. Maybe it's for me, to show that I am stronger than I ever thought possible.

I know I can't kill the snake in a day, or a week, or a month, maybe not even a year, maybe not even a lifetime. But if I don't give up, maybe it'll at least lessen it's hold on me.

Maybe it's okay that I can't kill the snake yet, but just knowing that I *can* fight it, I think that's enough for now.

## Chapter End Notes

It was some friends who gave me the ideas for the topics of this chapter, to try to fight the snake and how to do so.

I have been so crazy busy lately so that's why this chapter is so late. I thought this was an important one so I hope it's okay.

I think I know what I'm gonna do about the end of this story as long as all goes as expected so that'll be interesting I guess. I am really scared to end this story though.

To lose this. I never expected in my wildest dreams that a story I wrote could become as big as this one did, that so many people would not only like it but comment on it.

And that I could make friends through it. And I'm scared to lose that, lose the support I've gotten. I'm scared that once this story is over I'll be irreverent and be right back to where I started, that I'll be alone again. But for now I still have this story and it's definitely not over yet so that's good. Thanks for sticking it this far guys

## to forget my nightmares

### Chapter Notes

trigger warning for mentions of suicide

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Sometimes...the snake wins.

*Most of the time...the snake wins.*

*But normally not like this, not this bad.*

Normally I am able to fight back, even if it's just a little bit. Sometimes it feels like I may actually have a tiger trying to protect me. Like I may have a chance, like it's not just a suicide fight. *In more ways than one.*

Not this time though, *god not this time.*

I thought I was making progress. The urges have been strong still but I've been keeping them at bay for the most part. *Well, I've been trying to.*

*Not this time.*

I don't even know why, I don't understand. Nothing big happened. There was no huge tragic event that happened to have caused it. No, it was just the little things. Every little thing adding more and more weight to me piece by piece. I was bound to crumble eventually. *I always crumble.*

*Like a sandcastle, built so high only meant to fall back apart. Only to be walked upon and smashed back into the ground, just to be built back up. Never lasting, never permanent. Just for show. Just to look good for a while, but everyone knows the water will wash it away. It will drown.*

Normally it's quiet, my broken pieces shattering even smaller and smaller. Smaller and smaller.

Smaller and smaller. Until there's only dust left to be washed away.

*Not this time.*

No, not this time. It wasn't quiet, but it wasn't screaming. *Well...*

It started with a nightmare. *I thought my nightmares were finally getting better.* No, I didn't wake up screaming or crying, I don't usually cry in my sleep, and I never scream. I'd like to say I know better, but rather it's like I just can't make a sound.

I know the nightmare wasn't real, but it won't leave my mind. *It won't just leave me alone.*

*The really bad ones never leave me alone. Every time I close my eyes it's back, I see myself trapped again. There is no escape, no rest, you can't get a break from your own mind.*

*And maybe the worst part is that I know it's not real, I know it shouldn't scare me this much. It shouldn't be able to hurt me. Not this much at least.*

In the nightmare was unusual, it wasn't like a first person point of view, it was like I was watching myself through a camera. I didn't have any control over my actions, I was just a bystander observing with no say in what happened. I was helpless.

*Part of me wishes it was in first person. There are few things more helpless and powerless than watching yourself go through something horrific and not being able to do anything about it.*

I saw a clear box, it looked as though it was made of glass. Inside the box I saw myself, or rather my body, presumably unconscious on the floor of it. The box itself wasn't very wide, not even enough for my body to stretch out, I just laid curled in a ball. This other me, my double, my dream self, whoever he was... I didn't see a way out for him.

The box was tall, so very tall, with the top open. Like a tower with no roof. *False hope.* There was no physical harm from what I could see on my double. *That doesn't mean he's okay.* The most alarming thing about this predicament being large chains attached to each of his limbs. Yet the other end of each chain was not attached to the floor, just laying there next to the limp body.

*Oh god the chains...*

Slowly I started to see my dream body stir, appearing to wake up. His eyes widened upon seeing his surroundings. He attempted to uncurl himself only to feel the weights against his limbs. Even with the super strength I assume my dream self possessed, I could only watch as his muscles strained at the weight of the chains. He desperately grabbed at the chains and pulled with all his might.

I watched his mouth open, I can only assume he was speaking, or rather screaming, yet I couldn't hear a sound. Again and again I watched his face and throat strain as he appeared to scream. I couldn't hear a sound.

There was nothing I could do but just watch my dream self struggle, panting with each pull against the binds. Even when he strained every muscle in his body the chains never even seemed to give the slightest bit. His eyes widened even more when he finally realized he couldn't pull them off himself. It was upon that realization that the metal seemed to grow thicker. His hands fell at the sudden added weight.

I desperately wanted to help him, but I couldn't move, I just had to see it all happen like a horror movie.

Before he tried to move again he finally took the time to actually look around more. When his gaze went up he finally noticed the open ceiling.

*I almost wish he hadn't.*

Even when he painstakingly forced himself into a sitting position he still tried to make himself stand. His muscles seemed to almost give out yet he kept pushing and pushing until he was standing.

Once he was stable, albeit leaning most of his weight against a wall, he started to try to climb up. Even though I was only watching it hurt me to see him slowly lift each limb and try to force it to stick to the walls. Each movement straining his already burning muscles even more.

Before his weak grasp on the walls started to waver he seemed to brace himself to fall.

*He knows he can't climb out.*

The chains crashed into the ground when he fell down, he only haven reached a few feet higher than his own height, no where close to the top of the box.

Even when his chains appeared somehow thicker, he wasted no time to get to his next plan of escape. He started to bang on the box walls with all his strength. They did not budge. They didn't even smudge at all. I guess they weren't glass.

*He has to know it won't work.*

It didn't start with a drip or a small stream, no it was like a waterfall started pouring into the box. Even though part of me knew it was a dream I still felt my heart hurt upon seeing my dream version flinch when the water hit him. When I looked up there was no source in sight for where the water could be pouring from. Quicker than even I expected the liquid began to pool around his feet, already starting to succumb him.

Even in the depths of my nightmare I knew this didn't make sense. Yet there was nothing me nor my double could do about it.

I watched his hands form fists and punch the walls with all his might, they didn't even crack. His mouth opened again, screaming, pleading, yet I still heard no sounds.

It looked as though the chains were starting to get thicker, weighing even more on his body. His hands actually fell that time with the added weight.

*I can't blame him.*

Then I watched my dream version start to try to climb up the box once again. No matter how many times he tried to raise his feet to place on the wall he couldn't lift them. The water already surpassed his ankles.

I had to stop watching him, watching me in a way, for a moment. Even when I took a deep breath I couldn't breathe right. He shouldn't be trapped like this.

*It's not fair.*

I watched the water level rise even more. It seemed to be rising even faster. My body tried and tried to even just lift his arms to hit the wall again.

*He's still trying so hard.*

The chains splashed the water each time his arms fell. With each splash, waves of water poured over his body, soaking him. Each wave of water beating him down. He fell.

*That only weighed him down more.*

When I watched my double struggle to even get on his hands and knees I felt my chest tighten. Before he fell, the water was already reaching his thighs, he would have to stand up quickly to get air. Guilt gnawed at me as I greedily took in deep breaths as he held his own.

By some miracle he once again rose to his feet. I watched his mouth open, saw the strain in his face, he must be screaming again. I couldn't hear anything.

*Should I have expected to?*

It was as if he was on mute. I did not hear his desperate yells, I did not hear the splashing of water or the chains scraping the bottom of the box. Not a sound.

The water would not cease. Every single time another wave smashed down it landed on his head, even when he moved to lean against the wall for support. Every single time he was hit he was pushed back under the water. Every single time he sunk it took him longer to rise back up.

I felt my chest tighten impossibly when the reality of the situation really hit me.

*I'm going to have to watch myself die.*

I watched my dream version pull his head out of the water with a gasp, I didn't hear that either. The



chains looked even longer than they were originally, yet they still did not appear to be attached to anything but my double.

The water was definitely coming in faster, already surpassing his chest. At this point he wasn't screaming anymore, just trying to hold onto any air he could.

I could only watch as the water reached his neck, then his ears, his nose. I watched him take a final breath as the water covered his body completely. His movements appeared in slow motion as his weighed down limbs started to try to swim. I have no idea how his body was able to reach the surface again. It didn't last long.

*It never lasts long.*

Before he could take a breath a wave of water hit him in the head, shoving him back under.

*The water never slowed.*

Despite the chains still on his limbs and the water still rising, he still tried to swim. Each stroke clearly draining him of whatever energy he still had.

Suddenly I saw people appearing around the box. They were all facing the clear box, all facing his struggling body. I watched my double try to get help, attempting to bang on the walls to catch their attention. He was trying to get them to really see him, to see his situation. I still could not see their faces.

*They didn't say anything, they didn't move. They just watched.*

One by one I saw each person turn away from the box. They did not step away, but they would not turn back around either.

The first person to turn their back on my dream self was May.

*She couldn't bare to look at him any longer.*

The chains on his limbs appeared longer.

Then it was MJ. After that, Ned.

The chains looked thicker.

*The weight is too much to bare.*

The water by now had filled the box, yet did not stop pouring in, only to spill out the open top of the box.

Then I watched Happy turn around, away from my double in the box.

He still tried to swim up, but couldn't even get higher than a standing position. I watched him frantically move, unable to hit the walls anymore with the unbearable weights on him, but still trying to get them to see. He still was trying to get help. If they only could really see him, then they could see the deadly trouble he was in. Then maybe they could help him. He was practically pleading.

*They're all letting him drown.*

It was Natasha to turn then. Only five people left facing him.

The chains grew bigger to the point where his body completely collapsed.

Pepper turned away that time. He tried and failed to even sit up.

Next it was Steve. He couldn't lift a single limb.

Then Sam. He lifted his head just to watch.

Then Bucky. He managed to lift one hand only enough to place against the wall. One last plea to be saved.

The last person to turn away was Tony. His hand dropped.

I watched the strain in his muscles. I watched how red his eyes were, if he was crying you wouldn't see the tears as they just mix with the water around him.

*How has he not drowned yet?*

His head couldn't even lift from the floor. He just looked around for a moment, seeing every back turned away.

I watched my double open his mouth and breathe in the water. I watched him close his eyes.

Only then did the water start to drain. As if the bottom of the box was open the water poured out, soaking the feet of everyone surrounding the box. Only once the water was completely out of the box did everyone turn back towards it.

I heard them gasp his name. *My name.*

I watched them reach forward, their hands passing through the walls of the box as if they weren't even there. They did not touch his body.

I heard them ask what happened. They asked why he didn't just get out of the box. Why didn't he just take off the chains? Why didn't he just swim out? Why didn't he just scream for help? Why didn't he just keep trying to escape? Why would he just let himself drown? Why would he give up when there's clearly so many people there to help? How could he be so selfish when they cared so much? How could he be so weak as to throw his whole life away? Why didn't he try harder? Why did he let himself die?

*Why did he kill himself?*

I wish I woke up screaming, maybe then someone would hear me. I woke up with a gasp, taking in every breath like I may never be able to again. You never know when that privileged may be stolen from you.

I think that may just be one of those nightmares that I can never forget.

## Chapter End Notes

So I wrote the nightmare for a couple reasons, because I've been having nightmares more frequently again and I'm venting, and because I thought it was a good opportunity to have some more imagery and metaphorical stuff in here. The reason that the nightmare is not really in first person like normal is because that's how a lot of my nightmares are in real life. It's like I'm watching myself through a camera and I watch all the horrible stuff happen to 'me' and there's nothing I can do about it and it's so trapping and helpless and so I figured I could bring that into here. I haven't really seen too much with that kind of nightmare before in writing so I figured I could try it out. But I do realize it can get confusing with the two Peters so I hope it wasn't too bad.

I went through like six different versions of this chapter before I finally could decide on something. When I finally found time to write nothing good would ever come out and when I finally forced myself to write something it sucked. So this is after several rewrites and editing and crap so I hope this is okay. And even then it was only when one of my friends helped me edit that I got anything decent written.

I thought I would have more time, to relax, to write, to read, to paint, to enjoy myself, once I got out of school. I was very much wrong. I have just been so so overwhelmed and I have had barely any time to really do anything I like. I am always either doing work for something. Every day I have to dedicate to either getting the house ready or working on making wedding decorations or other commitments I have been forced into. There's hardly any time to breathe and I can't stand it but there's nothing I can do about it. I have so much left to do for this story but I am nowhere near where I thought I would be by now. I'm really sorry. I am just so behind in literally everything I can't keep up. I'm definitely going to keep on trying to find little moments to write but life is just so insane right now.

This mini storyline is definitely not over I do know what I'm writing for the next chapter so I'll try to work on that as soon as possible, I just figured that since I haven't posted in so long I should post this.

## to be honest

### Chapter Notes

trigger warning, mentions of self-harm

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

I wish it was just the nightmare that screwed up my day. I'm just not that lucky.

Nightmares are not a new thing in any way, I've been getting them since I was five, but this one was so surreal...

I didn't miss Tony's worried glances he tried to hide during breakfast. I know he knows I'm not okay. Part of me just wants to break and pour it all out to him. Part of me just wants him to hold me and comfort me and tell me he's staying. Part of me thinks I need to be like before, be silent, don't add any more weight to him. Part of me just wants to believe Tony, that it's okay to trust him and open up more. Part of me is too terrified.

People talk about the recovery. The war, the journey, how long and hard it is. But what people don't usually talk about is not wanting to recover, and the fear of recovery.

I didn't used to want to get better. It was only recently that I realized that I really do want to get better. Well, for the most part.

There's a million reasons why recovery can be so terrifying.

Because I deserve it, I deserve the pain and suffering.

It's easier. It's so much easier to give in and drown than it is to try to swim.

I knew I would fail. I can't do this on my own.

If I ever recover, I would be irrelevant. No one would care anymore. They wouldn't be here for me

to listen or talk or anything. I wouldn't technically need them anymore. *But I do need them. I need them so badly it aches.*

It seemed pointless. Because even if I recovered how could I ever last without at least one relapse?

There is no certainty that it's even possible. I could try so so hard and never be better. *That's what's happening now.*

And if I'm better, if all the screwed up parts of me were gone, were healed then what's left? Is there anything other than the monster that I am? Who even am I if I'm not depressed and anxious and suicidal and self-destructive? Will I be better or just a few parts trying to fill in the gaping holes of who I was? Who even was I before everything happened? I'm definitely not the same person and I don't think I want to be.

If I'm 'better' and I have a bad day, who will believe me? It'll just look like I made this whole thing up. I didn't. I didn't make this up, it's real. *It's real and it's so scary.*

*I'm still scared.*

The idea that everyone actually thinks I'm faking everything still takes the breath from my lungs sometimes. I can't tell if the snake loves or hates that idea.

It may have been my nightmare that started my day horribly but it was a sentence that really pushed me into the no returns area. Sometimes it's not just one thing to shoot me down, sometimes it's just a million little things tearing me apart. *Not this time.* No, I have the little things and the one big thing. I'm just that lucky.

I not only get a god awful nightmare but I also woke up to the realization that Tony and Pepper's wedding is only in a month now and then of course is that stupid sentence. *I should have just stayed in bed.*

"Oh Underoos, I forgot to tell you, we gotta go get your suit fitted for the wedding," he said it so casually between bites of our waffle breakfast.

His casual tone did nothing to soothe my anxiety. A fitting means taking off my clothes and being trapped in a room with a stranger and being touched and *oh god I can't do this. I can't. I just can't.*

“Kid, talk to me, I can see you’re upset,” his voice got quieter even though no one else was around.

“I don’t wanna go,” I didn’t mean for the words to come out in a whimper.

“Okay,” just by his tone I could tell he didn’t understand.

I took a shaky breath, staring down at my breakfast rather than at him, “I don’t want to take my clothes off...”

I watched the blood drain from his face. Before he could find a response I continued, “I know it’s stupid, I know it shouldn’t freak me out so much but like I just-I just can’t do it.”

“Hey, hey, it’s not stupid. It’s a trigger, you can’t control that. I’m sorry I didn’t think about how the fitting would affect you.

I shook my head as I said “no, that’s not your job to have to deal with my triggers.”

He gave me a sad smile, “Kid I’m your dad, it is my job. I am here to support you and help you work through this kind of stuff.”

I finally looked up at him, “I’m so scared.”

I watched as he stood up, made his way around the table, and pulled me into a hug, “I know Pete, I know. I’m here.”

If it were not but me biting down on my lip I would have cried right there. I’ve cried in front of him enough already.

Without letting go of me he broke the comfortable silence we fell into, “we’ll figure this out, okay?” I nodded into his chest. “Would you rather have the fitting here in the compound rather than at the shop?”

*I-I don't know. I don't want to associate my home with something so so triggering. But being in an unknown place would just put me on edge even more.*

“I don't know,” I mumbled. *If I don't tell him what I'm thinking he can't help, can he?* “I don't want it to happen here, I don't want to feel unsafe here. But being at a seamstress or whatever would be so uncomfortable too.”

He nodded, “that makes sense.” *It does?* “Why don't we go there then, to the tailor? I'll stay with you the whole time if you want.”

I managed a nod, attempting at a deep breath. *God I don't want to do this.*

...

*Oh god oh god oh god oh god oh god-*

“It's over Pete.”

*No it's not. It's not it's not it's not it's never over I have to come again the suit didn't fit.*

“I'm so sorry kid...”

I didn't mean to flinch away when he touched my hand. *Oh god my hands are shaking.*

*She touched me. She touched me so much I didn't-I don't want her touching me, I don't want anyone I don't trust touching me. Please don't touch me, please please please.*

“I'm here. I'm here, I'm not leaving.”

*She saw, I know she saw.*



The tailor place didn't have doors they just had curtains. Which was good and horrific at the same time. I guess Pepper had ordered me a suit already and we just had to get it altered but-but *oh god*.

*Tony said he'd be there. He said he'd stay.*

I tried to be so careful. I closed the curtain as much as I could and I even made sure to dress as close to the wall as possible so that no one could see me through the curtains. But she-the tailor, she walked in on me. She just opened the curtains wide and saw me when I was just in my underwear about to put on the pants. *When she walked in, all I saw was May locking me in the bathroom with her as she checked my cuts.*

*The tailor had to have seen my scars, she looked right at me.*

"It's over now."

*I'm going to have to go through it again. And if it doesn't fit that time I'll have to go again. It will never end, will it?*

"How are you feeling, Peter?" Tony asked, desperate to get any kind of response from me.

It was such a simple question. All I had to say was 'I'm okay'. I say it all the time even though I know it's not true. I never believe it. It's just such an easy way out, it hides a million emotions in just two words. *A lie.*

It was like I didn't have control of my mouth. It was like I wasn't me for a moment.

"I want to smash my head on the floor."

It's a thought I never dare to say aloud. *At least, not aloud again.* I didn't even realize I had even said it until I heard Tony's breath catch in his throat.

"Pete-" he took a shaky breath, never taking his eyes off me.

It's a thought I have quite often. One time I said it to Ned but he thought I was joking. Just one of those self-hating jokes so common nowadays. But it's not a joke.

It's not funny just how often I think about the sound of my head *cracking* against the floor. I think about how much it would hurt, how much blood would drip out of my head, how many times it would take to bleed. I think if I would give up with just one hit, if it would only take once. I think about how loud it would be, if the smack would echo through my head. I think about how long it would take for me to pass out, that if I break my head maybe my mind will finally break along with it. Maybe the thoughts would crash to a stop. Maybe I can finally have some silence.

I see it all so vividly. I think about how easy it would be, how quick it could be.

*I promise I didn't mean to say it aloud.*

Tony just sat there for a second, gaping at me.

*Oh god oh god oh god oh god did I really just say that?*

Before I could start spewing desperate apologies his voice sounded, "god Peter." *He's mad at me, I ruined it, I knew I would. He's so upset and disappointed and disguised and-* he pulled me into a hug. Which was awkward since we were already in the car, but a hug is a hug.

"I'm here and I'm not letting you go."

I vigorously shook my head 'no', "let me go. Just let me go," I begged.

"Peter-"

"No, please, I'm not worth it, I'm too much. You'd be happier if I wasn't here."

"No, *no*, kid. I would not be happier without you, how-" he took another shaky breath, "I would never and *could* never be happier without you. I know it's hard for you to believe but it's true. I promise it's true."

“I’m sorry...” the tears finally came.

“Please, please don’t be sorry. I’m proud of you.”

I actually choked on my own sob. The shock of his statement sent me into a coughing fit. Red faced and out of breath after the fit subsided I asked, “what?”

He watched for a second to make sure I wouldn’t choke again before answering, “you were honest. You told me you were scared to come and you told me that you’re feeling self-destructive. I’m proud of you for coming to me instead of bottling it up.

*I don’t understand how he could be proud of me. I’m sitting here crying because I had a suit fitting, I’m pathetic.*

“We’ll work through this, together. I’m not leaving.”

*He hasn’t left yet, even though he has every reason to. He has no reason to stay, to keep me, to listen, yet he does. So could that mean he’s right, that he’s staying?*

I want to believe it.

## Chapter End Notes

Oh guys I’m so sorry this took so long. When I say these past few weeks have been a rollercoaster I really mean it. My twelve year old cousin passed away. His health has been declining for years and it got to the point that there was nothing left the doctors could do to help him. He’s not suffering anymore, and I am so relieved he’s not in pain still but I miss him so much. I couldn’t go to his wake because I had to take an important test which I had been worrying about for a month, which I did pass. I did get to go to his funeral.

Three days later was my brother's wedding. It didn’t go completely smoothly but overall it really was magical. I got to have a dance with my brother which I know is a memory I will cherish for the rest of my life.

A few days later I had the worst panic attack I’ve ever had in my life. The day itself

utterly sucked. Even I never thought my mind would get so bad..

In the days in between, I've still been so busy. I'm still having bad days more often than good days, but there has been a few good days. I've been thinking about this story a lot but I've either had no time to write or I've had no motivation. I've gone through a few versions of this chapter and I'm still not happy with the result but I really just want to move forward with the story. I really do not like this chapter and I know I shouldn't post something I dislike so much but I'm just so sick of being stuck on the same stupid chapter.

What Peter said about smashing his head is something I think about a lot. It's something I thought about mentioning in the story earlier and honestly I don't remember if I ever actually did.

I figured that since dress alterations is one of the most triggering things for me and I've had to do five in the last couple months I could write about it. I know it sounds stupid but it brings back too many bad memories and I panic really bad every time and since Peter is very much based on me I figured I'd write it happening to him too. And that did happen to me, the tailor walked in on me changing into my dress and I started panicking really badly.

And I know Peter is supposed to be getting better, but so am I and this is where I'm at. This story is for me first and I need to be able to let out my emotions somewhere. I really do want Peter to be getting better and I'm trying so hard. But I can't write something fake, I can't write something I don't know. I don't know what it's like to be fully recovered so I can't write that. I'm writing from where I'm at right now. I'm sorry I know it's not what you guys want, I think it's what I need to do to try to help myself.

I'm really trying guys. I know I'm not succeeding but I'm trying.

## a key

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

*“The truth will set you free.”*

I don’t know why but the quote suddenly popped into my head, and it refuses to just pop back out.

The truth didn’t set me free, did it? It all started with the truth, after months of lie after lie after lie after lie after lie... *I never thought they would end.*

Everything started when, for some reason that I still wonder why about, I decided to tell the truth on that mandatory depression test in health. Well it was mostly the truth, I lied on a few questions. The last question asked if you needed to talk to someone. I said no. *I lied.* My counselor talked with me anyway. He took me out of class, I can still feel everyone’s eyes burning into the back of my head as I walked to the door where he stood, waiting. I never spoke in that class, that wasn’t my place.

My place was the back, silent and obedient. My classmates knew I never broke a rule. Sometimes I wonder if they knew why he called me out of class.

He didn’t bring me down to his office at first. He just closed the classroom door, my depression test results printed out in his hand. He went through every question, saying that with the answers I gave, there’s a chance I have depression. But I already knew that. I’ve read about the signs and symptoms of depression more than I would like to admit. I have taken every single free online depression test I could get my hands on, multiple times. I watched as the results all said moderate depression, to, a few months later, severe depression and to get help immediately. I never listened to that last part.

That’s when I lied. *Again.* I lied straight to my school counselors face as he read my answers back to me. I denied them all, knowing they were painfully, suffocatingly true.

Then it was that one question, that one god awful question... *no one, at that point, had ever asked me it so directly before.*

It wasn’t even on the test, he just decided to ask. *I wasn’t ready.*

*I just...I couldn't, I just couldn't lie.*

“You’ve never self-harmed, right?” He smiled a bit as he said it, even laughed a little, I knew it was just part of the routine. It was mandatory to ask. He never thought I wouldn’t be able to deny it.

*I couldn't really tell the truth either. “Sorta.”*

“Sorta? What does that mean?” He immediately sobered up, not a hint of lightheartedness left in his features.

That’s when my answer started to sink into us both, “a little? Not much, it’s not bad, really.” I was practically pleading with the man, staring up at him. He was at least a foot taller than me, but in that moment he seemed a hundred feet taller.

“Let’s go down to my office.”

My instincts screamed to keep talking, fix it, try to downplay it as much as I could. But the damage was already done. He knew the truth.

Sometimes I wonder what would have happened if I just lied on that depression test. I knew the right answers. *No I have not lost interest in things I used to love, no I have not been constantly tired no matter how much I may rest, etc.*

All I had to do was keep lying. I had been doing it for months, it would have been so easy.

*I think part of me wanted someone to see. Part of me didn't want to stay invisible. Part of me wanted to matter. Part of me wanted someone to save me.*

I know better now, no one’s coming to save me. It’s my job to save myself, others may try to help along the way but that’s not their job. I am the only one obligated to save me. *Is it even an obligation or is it a courtesy to myself?*

In the lobby of the counselors office was a boy from my English class, I refused to meet his eyes as I walked past him.

I did not sit down right away upon walking in, I lingered, as if there was any possibility of escape left.

He closed the door and all I could do was try to breathe like a normal person. *I'm just not normal though, for a plethora of reasons.*

He gifted me a few seconds to breathe, in and out, in and out, *in and out, in, in and-and I can't do it, in and oh my god I'm so stupid, I need out I can't get out I can't I can't I can't I can't-*

He broke the crushing silence, "What did you mean 'sorta'?"

"It's not bad, I haven't done it much," *lie, lie, lie, wrong answer, that's not what he wants to hear.*

"What do you mean? Like cutting?" He really was trying to understand and I was not doing him any favors.

I didn't dare meet his gaze, I couldn't, "yeah..."

Then the realization hit me. "Please don't tell my aunt," I didn't care that it came out as a pathetic beg.

He appeared almost sympathetic, almost, "you can't ask me to do that." I did not really understand that statement until later on.

That was when I finally looked him in the eye, "Please don't tell her..."

"I need to." I vaguely remembered a boringly long slideshow at the beginning of the school year about the school counselors. How they legally must tell a parent or guardian if the student is a danger to themselves, others, or is someone is a danger to them. I think the only reason I remembered was because I considered reaching out to my counselor for help, but immediately decided against it upon realizing he would tell May.

“Please don’t tell her, please. Can you call my family friend Tony instead, he would be a lot better.” I really was not above begging.

He looked more confused than anything, “since Tony does not have guardianship over you I can not tell him instead of your aunt.”

“It won’t go well...” *I had no idea then just how horrific it would be.*

My counselor did not have a response to that.

“What are you going to tell her?” I asked, knowing he wouldn’t change his mind no matter how much I begged.

“Just about the test, that we talked about it, and what you told me about the cutting.” He made it sound so simple. *Like it would not destroy everything I knew.*

*I did not find out until later that he also told May that I didn't want him to call her, that I asked him to call Tony instead.*

By the time he let me out of his office I had missed the rest of my class and lunch was already almost over. The conversation seemed to last an eternity yet the rest of life moved forward like nothing happened.

As soon as I walked into the cafeteria I knew I needed to get a hold of Happy. He was my only chance. If he could pick me up after school then I would have time before seeing May, I would have time to gather my thoughts and mentally prepare myself.

*No amount of time could have prepared me.*

I started off trying to be polite, even though I so desperately wanted to just cry.

*Hey Happy, is it possible for you to be able to pick me up after school today?*



I added a *Please* for good measure.

I waited a minute before I typed more.

*Please Happy, I really need to be picked up.*

He read my texts. Or at least he saw them, he opened up my messages.

He did not respond.

I watched the minutes pass, the precious few minutes left of lunch before I had to go to class and put my phone away. I did not even bother to go sit at my table, I just paced up and down the lunch room. No one paid me any mind, as if I didn't even exist. *In that moment, I wished I didn't.*

*Happy would you be able to just call after school?*

*I mean like, if you can't pick me up can I call you? Please? I really need to talk.*

I knew how desperate I sounded, I just couldn't find it in me to care.

*Happy I really need to talk.*

*Please.*

*Please.*

*I'm not okay.*

The bell sounded, the official end of the speck of hope I clung to.

The rest of the day could not go slow down even if you shot it with a horse tranquilizer. I checked my phone between every class. Nothing from Happy.

Nothing from May.

By the time the end of the day passed and I was walking down the front steps of the school I was just hoping the snake would just end me right there. That I wouldn't have to face May, watch her cry. That I wouldn't be in pain any longer, it would be better off for everyone.

The snake did not end me there.

*Happy, please pick me up. I know I'm a pain and I'm annoying you but I really need to be picked up. Please?*

He finally read my texts. I held my breath, not that it made much of a difference, but no reply came.

As I tried to think of other options for how to not go to May's apartment my phone buzzed.

It was May. She wanted me home.

The entire walk home I listened for my phone, *praying* for Happy to text back. He never did.

The truth did not set me free.

I told the truth and I had a meeting about my mental health.

I told the truth and my counselor called May.

I told the truth and I'm alone now.

The truth did not set me free.

The truth got me locked in a room with my clothes off with a woman I do not trust.

The truth got me pissed at my school counselor for not listening to me when I said it would not go well with May.

The truth got me locked in a bathroom trying to cut the snake out of me.

The truth got me jumping off a bridge.

The truth locked me in a room.

The truth made me more trapped than I have ever been.

But then... *but then Tony came. He came and picked me up.*

*The truth got me to Tony.*

*The truth got me to be adopted by someone who truly loves me.*

The truth is a key. A key that can either lock you in or unlock the door to free you. My key did both.

## Chapter End Notes

Well I wish I had a good reason for me taking so long to update. I don't. I have just been uninspired and tired and frustrated with myself constantly. I tried to write a chapter multiple times but I just could not get it right. This is nothing like those other drabbles I tried. This one sucks too but at least it's more real I think. A few friends tried to help me write and again this is nothing like those, I do want to try those ideas

more I just couldn't, at the moment I wasn't in a good mindset for it. This chapter is almost the exact thing that happened to me, I needed to vent. I've never actually told anyone this part, what happened with the school counselor, my desperate texts. I don't have a happy or a tony. I have my brother, I begged my counselor to call my brother instead of my parents but he couldn't. I texted my brother over and over but he didn't see them and did not respond until I got to my house. He lives in a different state so he couldn't come get me. I walked out of my house and called him. My dad followed me outside and made me get off the phone before I was done. What happened next is the events of the first chapter of this thing.

School is starting Monday and I am utterly terrified to say the least. I have no idea when I'll update next I'm sorry. I'll keep trying.

## a mother's love

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

I do not remember my biological mother. That's just how it is.

I used to actually think May was like a mother to me.

I believe that's one of the biggest lies she ever taught me. Yes, she raised me. But she is not my mother. She raised me to be afraid. To be afraid of her. Of her words. Her touches. Her screams. Her crying. Her everything. She taught me to be guilty. Guilty for spending too much money. Guilty for eating too much food. Guilty for wasting too much of her time. Guilty for being too much.

She taught me to hate myself. She never told me so blatantly. She said it how she used to refuse to buy me clothes of the correct size. She claimed I could never really be that size. She said it in how she would yell at me for being angry. She would yell at me for being scared. She would yell at me for being sad. She would yell at me for being happy. She said it in how I couldn't leave my room in fear of her yelling at me for bothering her. She would say it in how she never listened, never. She would say it in how she would make me take my clothes off. I never want *anyone* to see my body again.

Except I know she would never admit any of these facts are true.

*Sometimes I think of Pepper as like my mom.*

It's in the little things, like how she remembers that I only like sweatshirts with drawstrings, and that I find brown with green undertones the most useless color to draw with. It's in how she remembers I love the flavor of French onion soup but I don't like the actual onions, she remembers that the only kind of chips I like are tortilla chips.

It is in how she is not embarrassed or angry to order for me at restaurants if I am too anxious. In how she knows just the right things to say, and not to say. In how I never had to tell her I hate the phrases 'calm down', 'get over it', 'be happy', 'cheer up', she just knows never to say them. It's in how even when I can tell she's exhausted and overworking herself, she still makes time to ask how I'm doing, how I'm really doing.

It is in how even with the wedding coming up and running Stark Industries, she still makes time for me. In how she offers to do special outings, just the two of us, and still understands when I just can't do it mentally. It's in how she's willing to do anything for me, everything from making food I like, to being here whenever I need her.

It's in how she looks at me, eyes so full of love, compassion, and care. It's in that sweet smile, I haven't even seen her give a smile like that to Tony. It's a look I can only really describe as like a mother looking at her child.

Today is one of those outings, and today..I think today will be an okay day. I hope. Of course the snake is here, it's always here, but he's not worse than normal today. My thoughts are more of a nagging whisper than the intolerable screams they've been.

I'm not even sure where we are going, though I know both Tony and Pepper can in fact keep a secret when they really want to. Not everything is the whole "I am Iron Man" loose lips ordeal.

Except, the thought of not knowing where I'm going is not eating me alive this time. I know better now, I know Pepper is not going to bring me to a suffocatingly crowded place without telling me.

I would think that with the wedding being so so soon she would dedicate all her time to the final details of that, but it seems more than ever she is fighting to be here with Tony and I. *Will this be what it's like when they're married? If it is, maybe I don't have as much to worry about then.*

I do not want to worry. I do not want to be panicked about the unknown, and the known. I want to just enjoy the moment. Every moment. But for now, I'll just focus on trying to live in this moment right now, me and Pepper.

It is still almost strange to see Pepper wearing clothes that are not dress clothes and shoes that are not heels. Though, she still looks just as put together with her hair in a neat ponytail and shoes, clearly worn in yet still clean and shiny.

"I bet we're going to a disco club." Sometimes I have no idea where my stupid thoughts come from, but Pepper laughed at my dumb joke and that's what matters.

"It's definitely a disco club," Pepper laughed, to which I smiled back.

Moments like this make me want to smile forever. Moments were I'm just like a normal teen, with a great family and can go out and joke and laugh and be happy. It's moments like this I wonder if this is what it's like to be healed, to just live life not weighed down by a snake trying to strangle you and thoughts not trying to drown you.

It was only once Pepper parked the car that I questioned where we were.

"Why are we at an art store?"

She shrugged, "I figured you could use some new supplies." Her shrug did nothing to hide her somehow simultaneously mischievous and deeply caring smile.

"But this, this is the most expensive store in New York?" My eyes must have looked as big as frisbees looking through the windows to see the endless rows of markers and pencils and paper.

"Don't worry about prices, just pick out what you want," she said it like it's no big deal. Though I've been living with Tony for a while I really have tried not to take advantage of his wealth. I have been eating two, occasionally three, meals a day which is more than I ever ate at Mays, but besides that I really have tried not to ask for much. I *never* expected something like this.

"I don't even know where to start." I've just been using a school notebook and some pencils for my art, nothing fancy like any of this. "Can I just look around first?"

She laughed lightly, "That's why we came Pete," I smiled back.

First I walked down the paper section, Pepper following, browsing the different textures and thicknesses. I tried to refrain from running my fingers over every pad of paper, not wanting to tarnish the expensive material. The only item that really stood out was the pad of black paper, ideas already buzzing through my head of all the unique possibilities. I didn't pick it up though.

The paint section was next, I never really got into liquid watercolors though so it was just a quick look around before moving to the pencil aisle. Or should I say, *aisles*.

The greedy part of me wanted to take one of every single pencil, but I only gingerly picked up a few and tested them on the provided tester papers.

“You like the pencils do you?” Just by her tone I could tell she was genuinely curious.

It was almost hard to pry my eyes away from the glorious selection of utensils to look at my mom. *I mean Pepper. To look at Pepper.*

“I do yeah, it’s easy to get nice gradients and values. I have always wanted to try nice alcohol based markers though. They’re so expensive though.” *I shouldn’t have said that.*

I could tell she didn’t know what I meant by ‘alcohol based markers’ but she asked, “do they have those here?”

*Only the biggest selection I have ever seen.*

“Yeah, yeah they do.”

“Do you want to go look at those then?”

I nodded, starting to put the pencils I picked up back in their respective holders before she stopped me, “we can get those if you want, you don’t have to put them away.”

My eyebrows furrowed, “are you sure? It’s okay, I know it’s a lot of money and-”

I didn’t mind that she cut me off, “Pete, it’s okay, that’s why we came, so *you* can pick out the supplies you want.”

“But why? I mean, it’s not like I’m not grateful, I am. I am so so grateful, thank you, but I just don’t understand why. It’s not my birthday and I’m okay with the pencils I have, why are you bringing me here now?” I still sometimes fail at cutting my rambles short.

“Well firstly, I thought it would be good to get you out of the house for a bit,” she joked a little before turning more serious, “and I figured it would be good for you to be more encouraged with something you love to do. If you enjoy art then Tony and I want to help you improve and if new



supplies are what it takes then we're happy to. It's not like you ask for much anyway." *I try so hard not to ask for too much.*

"Plus I love you and I want to help you be happier." She said it like it did not make my world stop for a moment.

"You love me?" I didn't dare breath, not risking breaking the moment.

I've been able to see for a while how she looks at me, that she looks at me with love but it's so much more real to hear her say the words.

"Of course I love you Peter. I've only loved you more and more as we've spent more time together," truth bled through her words.

I blinked back the happy and relieved tears, "is-is it okay if I..if I um..may I hug you?"

She laughed, she had tears in her eyes too, "yes of course, you can always hug me."

She pulled me into a warm hug.

I said it in a whisper only she could hear, "I love you too."

She gave me one last squeeze before we parted.

Wiping her eyes, "ready to get some markers?"

"Yeah," I couldn't keep the smile out of my voice.

*Pepper actually loves me.*

The thought alone kept the smile on my face.

I only got lost once trying to remember where the markers were kept.

*Wow.*

Yeah I knew the store was huge with an even bigger selection but wow. Row after row after rack after rack just *filled* with markers. I just started testing any and every color that stood out to me, mostly reds and blues. Some yellows to go with the red too.

“What about these?” Pepper picked up a pack of brush tipped markers.

“Those are good quality but I prefer alcohol based over water based. I used to have a few cheap alcohol based markers but they dried out and I couldn’t afford the high quality ones.”

She put the pack back, “why do you like the alcohol based better?”

I’ve gotten better at answering simple questions like these, “they’re better for layering I think. They don’t make the paper bead up like water based markers do, which is good for blending because blending with markers, depending on your technique, can take a lot of layers of ink.”

She actually looked impressed, “you know a lot about these.”

“I mean, yeah I guess. I used to watch marker reviews online a lot.”

Pepper picked out a few colors and tested them on the paper pads, “wait does that say seven dollars for a marker? A single marker?”

“Yeah,” I laughed, “It’s seven dollars each. That’s why I could never get any.”

“How could a marker be that much?” her eyes were so wide, it’s kinda strange to see her being so loose and expressive. It’s nice.

“Well I think for these in particular it’s thanks to the nibs. Brush tipped markers in general are more expensive than a bullet nib, but these are really high quality. And with this brand you can buy replacement ink cartridges so you don’t have to buy an entire new marker every time”

“What’s a bullet nib?” She asked.

“Oh,” I grabbed a different marker, and opened it revealing the bullet nib, “it’s small, good for details. Most double sided markers come with a chisel nib,” I capped that end and opened the other side to reveal the chisel nib, “which is good for filling larger areas.”

Her eyebrows still raised, “I never knew there was so much to learn about markers.”

“Oh I could stop if you don’t want me to keep rambling,” I’m talking too much.

“No, no, Pete it’s okay. I like hearing you talk.” *How can she be so sweet?*

I can’t remember the last time I’ve smiled this much for so long, “Thank you.”

“Absolutely,” she tested out a deep blue color. “What do you think of this one?”

“It’s nice,” I answered as I tested a yellow, a similar shade to my decathlon jacket.

She held onto the marker, “it’s a similar color to a dress I wore once. Tony said that’s the night he really fell for me.” Now that smile, that’s the smile she saves for Tony.

“I didn’t know that. I do love the color,” it’s fascinating watching people talk about the people they love, watching their eyes grow distant, almost in a trance. For a moment they’re floating in memories and emotions, they’re somehow both weightless and weighed down by the longing of wanting to be with them. It’s a beautiful kind of contradiction. The small smile that graces their lips is the kind you hardly ever have the privilege to see but oh is it precious.

“So,” she changed topics, “would you rather get a set or just pick out what colors you want? Or some of both?”

*How on earth can she be so generous?*

“I mean...” do I be greedy or just get the pencils and go?

“What did I say about worrying about money? You don’t need to worry about it right now.” She wasn’t actually mad, more of a playful chide.

“A set would be good, if that's okay. Would I also be able to get one of those blue markers? The one that’s the color of the dress?” I decided.

She nodded, “yes of course. Pick out whatever set you want then we can circle back and get some pads of paper, I saw you eyeing them earlier,” she winked.

Yep, this is the woman Tony fell in love with. And I love her like a mom. *And she loves me too.*

## Chapter End Notes

Well this is not where I thought this chapter would go but I kinda like it, a bit. I’ve restarted this chapter at least five times and I do think this is the best outcome I could have gotten right now. I really did not expect to nerd out about markers but it was fun. I just started school, I’ve been in for about three weeks and it kinda sucks. I could go on and on about how much I don’t like school but no one wants to read that so.. I’ll keep working on trying to get these chapters out quicker. Thank you for reading :)

## a Doctor

### Chapter Notes

tw very brief mentions of past suicide attempt

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Even after knowing each other for so long, Tony still unceremoniously flinched away when the portal suddenly appeared in his lab.

“What was that for! You couldn’t have *notified* me before infiltrating my home?” More than a few colorful words made their way between his shouts.

Stephen Strange dared to chuckle as he waltzed right in, as if he owned the place, “calm down Stark, I’m here to check on Peter.”

Tony’s annoyance quickly turned to concern, “why?”

“It’s routine, I am a doctor you know,” Stephen made it sound like a doctor just trespassing into your house is a normal occurrence. Not even for Tony Stark is it normal. “It’s been a few months, I wanted to see how Peter’s been doing with his legs and concussion.

Tony shook his head, “you already cleared him, you said he’d be fine.”

Stephen sighed, “I also came with a message from Helen. She never forgot about Peter, neither of us did.” He actually had a small smile on his face when he said it. For a moment, Stephen didn’t sound like the cold doctor most saw, but as a man who really does care.

Though that made Tony smile, he couldn’t get sidetracked, “You portled here to say he made an impact on you guys? That can’t be all.”

“It isn’t,” he sighed again, “she requested my help in trying to make medications that can work for Peter. Specifically for physical pain, anxiety, and depression.”

Tony's eyebrows raised, "did you get any results?"

"Nothing that's strong enough to help him without risking him accidentally overdosing. We're still trying though."

It was Tony's turn to sigh, "nothing about the kid makes it easy, does it?" There was still a clear fondness in his tone, past the exhaustion.

Then a thought occurred to him, "you don't have to make up excuses just to see Peter, you know," Tony smiled.

"I didn't make anything up," though the doctors tone was believable, he still smiled. "Will I be able to see Peter?"

"Yeah, yeah he's just hanging out with Barnes. He hasn't had too much time with him though lately, but they should be done in a bit."

...

Since getting my markers the inspiration just seemed to grow with each sketch. It's a feeling I haven't had in...well I'm not sure how long. Normally I either have inspiration but no motivation or motivation but no inspiration. It's a relieving change to be able to just *draw* .

The peak of my creativity, I deemed, was scrolling through my phone and finding some of the more aesthetically pleasing photos I've taken, I had been able to get my old photos onto this phone from my old one, and then attempting to draw them.

Bucky's here. And it's nice. We aren't talking, but just doing our own things. He's reading and I'm drawing, and it's the most comfortable kind of silence I could think of. Though none of my drawings turn out well it's still fun, surprisingly. That small part of me that ironically usually hides, that little confident part, decided to show Bucky the drawing I was working on.

"Keep going," he would say, "do the things you enjoy while you have the energy to do it."

It's an outline of the city with a sunset shooting out behind it. Well a cartoony and abstract attempt at it. I've never understood at all how people can draw anything realistic. My art style, I guess, isn't even really like animation, it's just cartoony and abstract and kind of weird. The only somewhat realistic things I can draw is suit design ideas and even that is not proportional whatsoever.

I don't mind though, that my art style is more abstract. It actually makes my chest feel a little less tight to have something that it's *okay* to not be perfect. Something that it's okay if it's messy and weird and imperfect and maybe not what people want *and like me*.

I couldn't help but shoot my head up at the sudden knocking at my bedroom door.

"It's Tony," he answered my unasked question, "I'm here with a friend."

A friend? Why does he always have to be so vague, who is that supposed to be? Pepper? *No she's more my mom than a friend.* Steve? *Steve would just come here on his own though, wouldn't he? He wouldn't need Tony to chaperone.* Happy? *Why would he come visit me though?* Wanda? *I haven't talked to her in a little while, I should.*

*Oh my god.*

*I have multiple friends, I actually have multiple friends now. Right? Yeah, yeah they stayed so they likely care. That makes sense, right? Yeah it does, it does, I actually have multiple friends. Wow.*

That thought actually succeeded in making me smile, even despite my slight nervousness of not knowing who's behind the door.

Bucky stood up behind me as I got up to go open the door. I did not succeed in hiding my shock upon seeing who was there, "Doctor Strange? Wha-what are you doing here?" I quickly backed up to let him in my room.

"Just wanted to check in with you," he smiled at me.

"Oh?" *I really was not expecting that*, "that's nice of you," I tried to smile back at him but I just, I really don't understand.

*Why would he want to see me? We barely know each other. Our only real interaction was when he took care of me after I attempted. What reason would he have to see me when I'm physically fine?*

My dad peered over Doctor Strange's shoulder, "he missed you kiddo." *He missed me?*

"You say that as if it's some horrible concept," Strange retorted.

To which Tony chuckled back, "you missing someone isn't horrible but it's an unusual concept."

Rolling his eyes, Doctor Strange turned back to me, "so how are you doing, Peter?"

"I'm okay," I responded automatically, ignoring the gazes from Bucky and my dad, *I know better than to just say 'I'm okay'*, "I'm pretty good, I was just drawing with Bucky."

What am I supposed to do? Are the four of us supposed to just stand here? Are we supposed to sit down? I have my bed and a desk chair but three people on a bed is kinda a lot but two people on the bed and one in the chair and one standing is just weird and I don't want to make this any more weird. *Why am I so weird?*

"You like to draw?" I almost forgot I was actively trying to talk to Doctor Strange.

I nodded as I responded, "yeah, yeah I love drawing. I'm not very good at it but it's fun." It's all or nothing with me isn't it, I say nothing at all or I shoot out my jumble of words like a garden hose. It seems I do more of the talking too much rather than the talking too little nowadays. *I don't know which is worse anymore.*

He kept the conversation going, "what do you like to draw?" The practically-a-wizard asked me.

"Just sketches I guess, not really anything in particular." I really suck at continuing on conversations.

"I'm glad you found something you enjoy," then he turned to business, "have you had any



problems with pain in your head or legs since I cleared you?”

I shook my head, “no, no nothing.”

His look he gave me was almost calculating, I tried not to squirm, “please feel free to let me know if anything occurs. Even if it’s not about your head or legs, you can always reach out,” though his words were actually very generous. “I apologize, I should be heading out. Thank you for letting me step in.”

“As if you asked for an invitation,” Tony joked, surprisingly getting one last smile from the Doctor.

With that he gave a last goodbye and turned around. Though when he turned he didn’t walk through the door but through a golden portal to who knows where.

## Chapter End Notes

It really was rereading some comments y’all left on previous chapters that motivated me trying to write again, so thank you for that. I tried multiple times with various ideas to write this chapter but nothing worked out. I know this chapter isn’t good but I’m glad at least I wrote something.

I really did not have the motivation or inspiration for a chapter. I actually, since posting chapter 77, read this whole fic for the first time. I’ve never actually read this story before, there’s definitely chapters I never proofread and haven’t even looked at since I posted them. There’s entire chapters I don’t remember. So I read the whole thing, it did help me to remember what I’ve talked about and plot holes and ideas I never resolved. I tried to fix all the typos and grammar mistakes I saw, though my formatting sucks and my plot is flimsy.

I want to say thank you. Thank you guys so so much for sticking through this far, for being so patient and understanding and kind. I can’t even explain how much it means to me.

I did also start writing another fic, completely unrelated to this one though. I absolutely love this fic and I’m absolutely going to finish it, but it’s not necessarily a fun story to write. I need it, it helps me vent and release, but it’s so heavy. I wanted to write a story that at least has the possibility for me to write more fun chapters and to try out things I haven’t been able to with this story, like more humor and romance (or at least my attempt at it). And I’m just really excited about the story, though I am very behind on updating that one too. I’ll try my best though to not let it interfere with What Do I Need, this story must be the priority as it does help me.

## to be grateful

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

I knew the day would come but it doesn't mean I'm prepared in any way.

*God a suit fitting should not steal the breath from my lungs or make me shake like a naked cat in the show.*

Tony said he would stay with me the whole time. *Yeah and he said that last time but somehow the tailor still walked in on me when I didn't have my clothes on.*

We're going to a different tailor this time, one that's supposed to be better than the last one. *That fact does indeed help ease the tightness in my chest, but not enough to let me breathe easier.*

*I would do almost anything if it meant I never had to do another suit fitting for the rest of my life.*

But it's not fair for me to say my worries to Tony or to Pepper. This is their wedding, it must be perfect and something as silly as a groomsmen's suit should not take away from their perfection. I'm lucky to have the privilege of being a groomsman, I need to be more grateful.

*It's not fair for me to say how scared I am to take off my clothes. It's not fair for me to say that when they touch me I have to refrain from flinching, that it makes me want to scream and scream and scream. It's not fair for me to say how terrified I am for someone to see my scars.*

Tony interrupted my thoughts, "you ready, kid?"

No.

I nodded, despite all my worries, despite everything in me screaming 'no'.

*Why does everything have to cause me so much worry? Why must everything make me feel like I'll never breathe properly again? Why does my chest have to so insistently tighten at every bad*

*thought? Why is everything so unbearable?*

My dad stopped for a moment and really looked at me before saying, “it’s okay to say no?”

I furrowed my brows, “what?”

“It’s okay to not be ready, to say no to my questions,” he clarified patiently.

I nodded, “yeah I know.” *I know that’s something he thinks is true but it’s not something I can do.*

It’s just not in my dad’s nature to give up, “I won’t let anyone walk in on you this time. I can’t express how sorry I am that I let that happen...” *that doesn’t fix the fact that she saw...*

Though he did fix the fact that I won’t ever have to see that tailor again. But even if this tailor is different it doesn’t mean that I’m any different, that this won’t trigger me...

*I’m so pathetic.*

Before either of us could say anything Happy came into the room, “Boss, if we don’t leave now you’ll be late.”

“Right,” he breathed out, “we should head out then,” Tony looked at me apologetically.

*Oh god please don’t make me.*

During the car ride Tony had tried to talk to me but I could barely keep my breathing even, let alone try to speak. We arrived at the tailor and I could already feel my face flush at the sight of the unfamiliar torture facility.

*This is ridiculous, I’m being ridiculous. A tailor of all things shouldn’t shake me to the bone and make me wish I were anywhere else. I shouldn’t be this weak that I can’t even handle a suit fitting.*

*I thought I was getting better. I really did, but no, I never am. I'm just passing time until the next trigger.*

*But this is a trigger, I'm not like this absolutely all the time anymore. It's because of the stupid tailor I'm like this right now.*

She greeted me with a smile, but it just looked like baring teeth to me, “hello, you must be Peter.” Her tone was warm, like a blazing fire ready to turn me to ash.

*God I hate how my mind can make any little thing seem so big big big BIG.*

I couldn't sing enough praises when Tony spoke for me, “yes this is Peter. Where should he try on the suit?” He went straight to business.

“Yes of course, this way,” she led us to a dressing room with a door, *thank god there's a door this time.*

She prowled off to snatch my suit, as soon as she was out of earshot Tony turned back to me, “how're you feeling, Pete?” *Even he knows I'm too weak to handle this...*

I shrugged. Just because I feel horrid doesn't give me the right to make him feel bad about an essential element of his *wedding* .

The tailor came back before he could inquire more.

She handed me the dreaded clothes, “here you go. Change in there and when you come out we'll see if there's any more needed adjustments,” she bared her teeth again. *God, what is wrong with me? It's not right for me to think bad about an innocent woman just because her work scares me.*

I went into the changing room, just seeing Tony stand in front of the door, like a soldier standing guard. The first thing I did was lock the thick wooden door, though I still stood as far from it as I could just in case. Then I removed the pieces of suit and laid them out on the bench there, for quickest access while changing. I had to take a deep breath before beginning to remove my clothes. Upon taking off my pants, out of habit I quickly checked my scars, seeing how far they've faded. Still present but not quite so blatantly noticeable.

As soon as I had my clothes off me I was shoving on the probably too expensive suit. I slipped on the pants like my life depended on it, set on making sure no one could walk in and see my scars again. *Never again will anyone see my scars.*

Finally it was just the shoes left, I jammed them in my feet before checking myself in the mirror. *I look completely awful.*

The clothes actually look really good, and god I hope the fit is good enough. But me, I'm the problem. My face is still flushed, my hair is amiss, my hands still quaking.

Oh, oh wait. This suit, it's the color of the marker Pepper bought me, the color of the dress she wore when Tony fell in love with her. *Wow they're clever.*

With another deep breath, which did nothing to help calm me, I trudged out of the room.

"Come here," she called me over like a prisoner to the electric chair. She stood me in front of a mirror, staring at me. That was when she started touching me. *Please stop please stop please please stop...*

She touched my shoulders first, pulling at the fabric, checking the fit. Then she did the same with the arms, then the legs. She murmured something I didn't catch before adjusting how I was wearing my pants, touching my butt in the process. *If I could have, I would have started screaming right there.*

She came around me, touching my chest, mumbling to herself about the fit of the jacket. *Please stop, please just say it's good and let me leave, let me leave please please please-*

After more uncomfortable touches she came to a decision, "there are still minor adjustments that can be made if you want, but if you do not wish to do them the fit is still pretty good."

I answered before Tony could speak up, "it's fine how it is."

She gave me a quizzical look before turning to my dad, "what do you think, sir?"

He didn't even have to think about the answer, "it's perfect. Do you want me to pay in cash or card?"

"Oh?" She gaped at him for a second, "card is fine. You can go change, hun," and with that I made my escape. I ripped the suit off as soon as I had the door locked. To my relief Tony was waiting for me outside the dressing room when I finished changing.

He gave me a sympathetic smile, "we can go now, kid. It's over."

#### Chapter End Notes

Yay I actually got this chapter out sooner than I expected! :)

## to let the weight drop

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

No matter how hard I try not to be, I'm still selfish. I do not want to keep having 'talks' with Sam, I do not want to keep having to talk to someone about things I don't want to. It's not helping me, I know that's stupid and I am more lucky than I'll ever be able to comprehend that I can go to a therapist, but it simply does not help me. At first it was kinda nice to be able to vent to someone, but now? Now I just wait, checking the clock every other second, hoping for once that time will speed up and release me from having to break open more. I may be broken but I am not broken *open*, I'm just jagged pieces that cut anyone who try to look past the shell of who I was. I'm not even sure if I can dig deep without being cut.

Sam has not told me much that I didn't already know, and that fact only increasingly frustrated me. I don't want to keep hearing the same things over and over, yes I know I'm hypocritical I tell myself the same 'lies' all the time. Either way, it does not help me. If I wanted inspirational quotes all the time, I would find them for free on Pinterest.

I need to feel blessed to have the money to access to a therapist, by why not just give the money to someone else? Someone more deserving? Someone who will actually be helped by seeing a professional?

I can't get out though, I can't. By going it helps bring ease to Tony's mind and I can't be so selfish as to worry him more. I just don't see the point anymore...

*I mean, part of me can see it. Part of me just wants to talk to Tony or Bucky when something is wrong, but that's not the right thing to do, isn't it? It's wrong of me to pretend Tony and Bucky are therapists when I know they aren't professionals. I know they don't have all the answers, I know they aren't trained, but sometimes I don't need an answer. Sometimes I don't need advice or a solution, sometimes I just need a shoulder to lean on and someone to listen. Sometimes I just don't want to be alone.*

A problem is, there's only a couple ways to get out of therapy. Either I have to be completely better, I think, or I have to convince them not to make me go.

*God I'm so selfish.*

Like, I am grateful I got the chance to try it. I am. I really am thankful, but maybe therapy isn't for

me, or maybe I need a different therapist. Either way, this isn't working for me. *Is that wrong?*

I have no idea how to convince Sam I'm better when he literally lives in the same building I do. He would be able to talk to anyone, ask Friday, he would have a way to know at all times if I was actually better or not. I would have to pretend around everyone, and I just don't have the energy to do that anymore. I did it for *so* long when I stayed with May. I pretended every single day, all day, through school and when I was around May or Ned or MJ or Happy or Tony. And they all believe me, as far as I know, so I should be able to fool them all again. *But I don't want to.*

*I don't want to keep living lie after lie. It's too draining, too suffocating. I want to be able to ask for help if I need it and be able to be sad when I feel it. I don't want to be trapped by my own need to seem okay all the time. Because I'm not, I'm not even sure if I'm okay most of the time but if I don't pretend, then I have the freedom to just feel what I feel.*

I could tell Tony. Eight simple words don't seem so simple when I have to face my parent and say *I don't want to go to therapy anymore* when I know that he wants me to. I don't want to disappoint him. I've disappointed him so much already...

*Would he be disappointed?*

I'm not sure if I think I need a therapist still, so it's not that I am just better enough to not need one. Maybe it would make him happy, *maybe even proud*, if I was better enough to not need a therapist, but that's not the case... Would he be angry? Mad that I'm throwing away something that's supposed to help?

I'll never know unless I talk to him...

If nothing else, I think when I open up a bit more to him it makes him happy.

...

"Lunch isn't ready yet, kiddo," Tony called out when Peter wandered into the kitchen. It's become a regular thing by now, for Tony to make Peter and Pepper lunch. It still makes the teams jaws drop when they see that Tony is now capable of making good food.

Tony only needed to look at Peter for a moment to know there was something on his mind, he



waited though, to see if his kid would bring it up himself. He has learned that trying to pry into Peter's life will only shut him out more.

Peter took a breath, "Dad?"

Tony stopped putting together the lunch and looked at his kid, "yeah Pete?"

Peter kept his eyes down, "I don't want you to be mad at me, or-or disappointed," that only caused the seed of worry in Tony to grow, though he did his best not to show so outwardly, "I just, I don't... I don't want to keep having *talks* with Sam anymore, I don't think it helps me." He paused, waiting for Tony to react.

He took a moment to think, "I'm not going to make you go, especially if it's not helping you. You're always able to go back though, if you change your mind."

Peter let out a sigh of relief, his shoulders slumping a bit as if a weight was lifted off.

Tony continued before Peter could respond, "I do think it would be good though to find another outlet for you, if you need or want it."

His kid nodded, "makes sense," after a pause, "thank you for being so understanding."

To that, Tony smiled, "thank you for coming to me."

After a mirrored smile, Peter declared, "I'm gonna go to the bathroom."

"You don't have to announce it," Tony chuckled. Only once Peter was out of the room did Tony let his own shoulders drop, trying to figure out how best to help his kid. He may have a lot more experience in being like a parent, but times like this only reminded him how much he was unprepared for. Tony would figure it out though, he's not the kind to give up.

Well it's definitely short but it's something :) thank you for reading

## a better balance

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Everyone is carrying weight. The weight of their mistakes, their fears, their problems, their past, their trauma, their emotions, everything. Everyone carries different levels of weight and what they do carry, each piece of weight, it feels different depending on the person. One thing can be next to nothing to one person, but be crushing to another. Other people's weight feels differently than someone's own weight, sometimes more, sometimes less, sometimes it differs. When you talk to someone, open up, you put a weight on them. It can be anywhere from as light as a piece of paper to as crushing as a willow tree.

Some people are better at carrying others weight, some just can not balance their own burdens along with those from others. Some can carry certain peoples weight but not others. Everyone has their maximum capacity, it's different for the piece of weight and for each person. Sometimes people can carry mountains, sometimes just a single additional pebble is enough to make them crumble.

Carrying weight is not a bad thing, it is inevitable, but holding onto it, making yourself bare more than you can take will only crush you. It is a difficult task to find the balance between pushing down the pain, dragging that mass and to open up and let yourself place weight on someone you care about. But if they care about you too, and if they can handle the burden healthily, then that is love.

*I think I finally found love.*

It is much too easy to take and take and take on more weight, try to carry everyone else's problems, boulders upon rocks upon mountains. It is not healthy to destroy yourself to try to save someone else. But, it is just as unhealthy to carry every single piece of your own weight with no relief or break.

*I don't want to keep being unhealthy.*

Something as simple as pushing down your own emotions and pretending to be happy can add more mass than anyone would see coming. Emotions in general add weight, it is inevitable. The best way to relieve yourself of that burden is by letting yourself feel. That sounds simple and easy, but often it seems a more difficult task than forcing a smile and acting like you have moved on. Sometimes the idea of tears running down your burning face is scarier than forcing a laugh. Sometimes trembling and stuttering is scarier than a mask of a smile. Sometimes screaming until your voice is gone and clenching your fists until your hands turn ashen is scarier than choking

down the emotion.

Even though tears cascading down your burning red cheeks is not as pretty as snorting in laughter, it is no less valid. Even though shaking hands and repetitive mumbles is not as pretty as a smile so bright even the sun has to blink, it is no less valid. Even though screaming until your chest burns and a blinding red in your eyes is not as pretty as making jokes until your side hurts from laughter, it is no less valid.

*It's still hard to see that sometimes.*

It is much more common to invalidate emotions than one would think. 'Be Happy', such a simple yet common phrase, often an artsy sticker on a hydro flask or an aesthetically pleasing photo on Pinterest. Part of the issue is the way it is worded, the 'Be', as if it is a command rather than a suggestion. Commands unmet often end in consequence, is it more than unhappiness or the disappointment of those who care that you can not simply 'Be Happy'?

Another part of the issue is just the idea itself, there is nothing wrong with negative emotions? When you lose a loved one, are you supposed to just 'Be Happy'? After failing a test? After a natural disaster? Is faking happiness supposed to help the one feeling it, or those around the, not feel that they must carry the burden of those real, *unhappy*, emotions?

'Be Happy' may be the one of the most common invalidating phrases but there are more than there ever should be: *Cheer up. You'll be fine. Get over it. Tough. Everyone goes through that. It's normal. That happens to everyone. Smile. Don't be upset. They didn't mean it. There is nothing to be upset about. It's not a big deal. It's just a phase. You're not seeing things clearly. You're making everyone feel bad. It doesn't matter. It can't be that bad.* These are only a sample of the endless seemingly innocent remarks much too common.

Helping someone carry their weight does not mean you must become like a therapist or a counselor to them, it can be as simple as just listening. Sometimes it is listen to them without judgement, to stay level headed when they open up, respecting their limits and boundaries, or to be a shoulder to lean on. There is no set it stone formula, it takes effort and patience and time and a willingness to take some weight. It is a balance of carrying and relieving, a balance not easily managed but necessary for mental health.

*I need to find a better balance.*

I'm so sorry I had to delete this chapter before. The circumstances that caused me to need to delete it have been resolved so now this chapter can stay in this story permanently.

## to smile

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

When I started practicing art more, it was just something for me. I knew it would never amount to anything, just a way for me to relax and try to find some fluttering moments of joy. If you told me that I would be making art pieces for a wedding, I wouldn't have believed you, but if you told me that I would be making art pieces for the wedding of Tony Stark and Pepper Potts, I would have thought you absolutely insane.

I also would have thought that with a wedding coming up oh so soon that all my time with my parents would dwindle to nothing, but I found myself wrong again. When Pepper asked if I would make art pieces for the wedding, a welcome sign, table number cards, cards saying what each food was, I did not allow myself to smile, not at first.

“Are you sure you want *me* to make them?” I did not allow myself to actually think they could want a novice's art such as mine to be in such a big affair.

Pepper gave me a soft smile, “we can think of no one more fitting.”

*That's just not true though, Steve lives here and his art is light years ahead of where I could even dream to be. Or if they really wanted masterpieces they could hire the most talented artists in the world to make the most extravagant signs.*

*Maybe that's the point though. They could ask so many better people than me, but they chose me .*

I felt my face break out into a smile, one that actually reached my eyes, “you want me?”

She laughed a bit, light and pure, “yes Peter.” I did not laugh back but my smile was larger than I would have thought possible.

To the assurance, I began my work. The one thing that did not surprise me was the crippling fear gripping my chest, trying to steal any fragment of happiness I can manage to find. *But I can't let it.*

With Pepper sitting on the couch behind me, me on the floor with the markers she bought me laid

out in front of me, I sketched out ideas for the signs. Periodically I checked with the bride to be, she always being happy to give approval and encouragement to my art.

I just had to double check, “are you sure this is the font you want? I can try a fancier one, if you want.”

No matter how many times I asked for her approval her patience never waned, “that one is perfect, Pete. They look great,” she smiled.

I did not bite back my own smile that time, choosing instead to just feel it. Let myself feel that little moment of happiness.

Sketching the welcome sign out in pencil first, a ruler in one hand and pencil in the other I made sure it was completely lined up right. *Tony and Pepper deserve the best.* With the sketch finalized, I finally got up the courage to use the permanent markers on the paper. Each stroke could not help but to terrify me, thoughts of my art degrading and ruining the wedding berating me, but I did not stop making the art requested of me.

I didn’t mean to jump when another voice sounded, “that looks great Underoos.” You could hear the smile in my dad's voice.

“You scared me,” I accused, only mockingly.

He smirked, “ah what an honor to have the stealth to sneak up on the great Spider-boy.” He came around the couch, plopping down next to his fiancé.

Though I know he’s only playing I still corrected, “Spider- *Man* .”

He kept his smirk up, “hmm, are you sure it’s not Spider-baby, I could have sworn it was.” I let myself smile at him, not caring if it ruined my mock annoyance. To my grin, his grew even bigger, “Spider-baby it is then.”

*I haven’t missed how hard he has been trying to get any smile he can get out of me, wanting to give me all the happiness possible for me.*

With a maliceless eye roll I picked up the sign I had been working on, holding it out for him to look at, “what do you think? Do you like the font, Pepper said she likes it but I don’t know if it’ll like match the aesthetic of the rest of the wedding decorations, y’know?”

He looked at the sign with that mechanic eye, looking for anything out of place. With all the fondness in him he handed me back the paper, “I love it, it’s perfect.”

“Wait really?” *That slipped out.* “There’s nothing you want me to fix?”

His smile did not falter at my constant need of reassurances, “nope,” he popped the ‘p’. With a small thanks I turned back to the artwork, continuing with the blue marker, the one the same color as what Pepper’s dress was.

I pushed down the worry still lingering in me best I could. *I can’t let my mind ruin this too, the wedding has to be happy. I can’t let the wedding be added to the list of things my mind has ruined for me, I just can’t.*

Sitting by my parents, doing art for them, listening to them discuss their wedding, I noticed the small smile still on my face. Small but real. I don’t think it really matters how small the moment of happiness is right now, as long as it’s genuine. Right now, in this moment, it could not be more genuine.

## Chapter End Notes

I did not mean to take such a long break from this story. Since that little prequel one shot thing I posted for this series I hadn’t posted in a month after that and I’m sorry. It’s been hard to find the time, motivation, and inspiration to keep up this story. I am in no way giving up on this, it’s just hard, life has been kinda crazy. I really am going to try to write for this story more. Thank you for sticking with the story, it means a lot. Thank you LittleMissAgrafina for helping me with the ideas for this chapter :)



## to plan

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Leaning back on the couch, I pulled out my journal. After writing the lists in it before, this one began filling more with writing than drawings or sketches for the lab. Though for the time being a new list has not been created, the ones made previously have remained untouched. Maybe that's the wrong decision, leaving something potentially triggering so close, but part of me wants to be able to see it. Be able to see where I was.

At this point, I'm able to sit beside Tony while I write, knowing he won't press me to share it with him. *It's a nice change.* Though I still can't help but keep the journal facing away from him, a habit not yet broken. We've been having more days like this, just us *living*. Him with his Stark tablet, me with either my art supplies or journal, being able to just exist together. *It's nice.*

While writing down some thoughts not yet ready to share, Tony spoke up, "Hey Petey," he waited until I finished writing my word and looked up before he continued, "what do you think about meeting some people who will be in the wedding? I figure, it might be easier for you to meet them one at a time before the day comes, since you'll be around them a lot."

*Oh yeah. On the wedding day, I won't really get to be around either of my parents. They'll be too too busy thanking all the guests or whatever it is you do at a wedding.*

"I want you to be as comfortable as you can be, Underoos," he assured me.

Closing my notebook, I shifted over to sit closer with him, "thank you." Putting his arm around me, he pulled me closer to him. Even without asking he's just so naturally grown accustomed to keeping me close. I never would have thought he could have grown so comfortable with physical comfort, it's so natural at this point, like his fatherly instincts are just ingrained in him.

*Meeting them would probably be easier than just seeing them for the first time on the wedding day. I really do want to be comfortable when the day comes, for me and for my dad. I don't want him to worry about me on his day.*

Putting my head on his shoulder, I answered, "yeah I think it would be best to meet them before the wedding. Who would I be meeting?"

He smiled down at me, “Well, you know all the groomsmen, it’s just Rhodey, Happy, Bruce, and you. For the bridesmaids you know Natasha and Wanda, but you have yet to meet Hope and Maria. I’m absolutely sure they will love you,” he said, completely sure of himself even without that patented overconfident Stark facade.

*I hope dad is right...*

*Meeting two people isn’t bad, it shouldn’t be bad. It’s just two, I just I really need them to like me. These are my parents closest friends in the world, I just I need them to like me.*

Part of me couldn’t help but wonder if dad could still be so mad at Steve, Clint, and Bucky that that’s why they aren’t in the wedding.

He hummed in thought for a second, remembering something, “kiddo, do you know who else is invited to the wedding?”

I shook my head, “no one has told me.”

“Sorry Pete, I should have told you,” I was quick to say it’s alright, but he continued on anyway, “kid, I know you. It’ll be better for you to know so that you can prepare yourself. First thing is despite what the press wants, it’s going to be a relatively small wedding. Just our closest friends and family.”

*Well that’s good, I would think celebrities as big as my parents would have weddings with thousands upon thousands of guests.*

He went on, “since you are a groomsmen, you’ll mostly be with them. You can hang around as few or as many people as you want, okay?”

He waited, expecting an actual response, “okay,” I added a ‘thank you’ before he spoke again.

“There will be extremely tight security, Pepper and I are trying our best to make sure we keep the press out. We have even made sure the date of our wedding is under close wraps for the most part, just to take another precaution. We hired photographers and videographers to capture the day, but they are not like the press, they’ll be out of the way.” As he was talking Bucky passed through the common room, joining us briefly.

I smiled up at him, “hi Bucky.” He gave me a soft hello before exiting the common room. I guess he just wanted a short cut.

“Oh!” Dad seemed to suddenly remember something, “I forgot to tell you Spider-Baby,” I let the embarrassing *but sweet* nickname slide, since this was an important conversation, no other reason *obviously*, “Bucky, Steve, and Clint are going to be ushers at the wedding, so you can hang around them if you want.”

*Wait what?*

I guess he saw the confusion on my face, “it means they are a part of the wedding, they will show people to their seats before the ceremony and things of that sort. I’m not really sure, Pep knows that kinda stuff,” he chuckled.

*I haven’t really met Clint though. But Bucky will be there, that should help.*

As if he read my mind, he asked, “have you actually met Clint? You’ve most likely seen him around, but I don’t think you’ve formally met each other.”

I agreed with him, “not formally.”

“Makes sense,” once again sensing my confusion, he explained, “he isn’t around here as much as the others. He has a family, so he’s with them as much as possible. When he’s here he’s always with Nat anyway.”

I really shouldn’t have been so surprised that other superheroes have families.

He exclaimed, “oh!” Suddenly, startling me.

I didn’t mean to jump a bit, “Oh?” Naturally he rubbed his hand up and down my arm, soothing the tenseness back out of me after that momentarily fright.

“Sorry kiddy, I just had an idea. You really haven’t been out of the compound lately, and you need to meet Clint anyway. So if he’s up to it and if you are, I think me you and Pepper could see if we can stay at his farm for a bit. A weekend getaway before the wedding,” he proposed the idea.

*Clint Barton has a farm?*

He allowed me a moment to think over the idea, “I think that could be nice,” I smiled at him. *It would probably be good to get out for a while, and I’ve never actually been to a farm before.*

He grinned back, “I’ll organize it with Clint and Pep.”

## Chapter End Notes

Well this chapter is definitely short but I’m proud I finally got myself to write something from this story. I have more ideas for the next few chapters which should help me actually write more often. School and home have been rough but I’ll keep trying to write.

Thank you again LittleMissAgrafina for helping me with ideas and actually sitting down to write :)

And y’all I definitely recommend checking out the works by LittleMissAgrafina I absolutely LOVE them, she’s doing a febuwhump/febufluff and it’s absolutely amazing

Thank you for reading :)

## a getaway

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

To my surprise, the hard part was not trying to convince Clint to let our little family stay at his farm, on the contrary it was convincing my dad's soon-to-be wife to finally take a break and join us for the weekend. I may or may not have brought out the puppy dog eyes when it seemed like she would refuse a vacation, saying there's too much to do with both Stark Industries and the wedding planning. Not even the great Pepper Potts can withstand the power of my puppy eyes though.

Flopped on Tony's enormous bed, I asked "hey dad? May I ask a question?"

"You don't need to get permission to ask a question, kid," he reminded me patiently as he folded a shirt and placed it in his suitcase.

I watched as he folded another shirt so easily, as if he has done this a million times, "sorry," before he could correct me two times in a row I continued, "whoops, not supposed to apologize," once he nodded in approval of my self-correction, I finally asked my question, "you've mentioned the roles of Steve, Natasha, Bruce, and Clint, but what about Thor?"

He did not stop packing his clothing while he answered the inquiry, "well I asked Steven Strange to get ahold of Thor, to invite him to the wedding. But last I checked he couldn't reach him, so Thor won't be able to make it."

I hummed in thought, "that's understandable. Wait, Dr. Strange is able to contact people in other worlds?"

My dad let out a laugh, "Dr. Strange is... he's like a wizard."

That was when I sat up, "a wizard? Like Harry Potter?" I crawled over, closer to my dad, laying down head in hands, "you can not just leave it like that! How is he a wizard? I thought he was a doctor?"

He tossed a pair of socks into the piece of luggage with a chuckle, "he's a wizard *and* a doctor, kid. And yeah sorta like Harry Potter, but a cloak instead of a wand."

“You mean a real life *wizard* was my doctor?!” I exclaimed, practically vibrating in excitement. Though the reasoning for why he was my doctor is still an extremely... sensitive topic, for the moment the thrill overshadowed the pain.

Smiling, “yeah kid,” finally zipping up his suitcase he mockingly accused, “didn’t I tell a certain bug to pack his own clothes?”

I totally not dramatically tapped my finger on my chin in such very serious thought, “nope, I don’t think so. There’s no bugs here, only a smol arachnid.”

He rolled his eyes just as dramatically, “you’re on tumblr too much,” he started to walk towards the door, not so subtly hinting that we are going to go start to actually pack.

Quickly hopping off the bed, I followed him, “the fact you can hear the difference between smol and small says way more about you than it does about me saying it.”

*When he and I joke around like this, it’s like a piece of me is coming back. That part, that humor and joy and light, is finally growing back inside me, slowly but so very much real. When he and I began having more real, deep conversations, part of me worried that we would not be able to have this. As much as those conversations help release some of the tension in my chest, sometimes this lighthearted joking around can lift even more of the weight. He really is more than I could have ever asked for.*

He chuckled at me, stopping in front of my bedroom door, giving me the opportunity to give him permission to enter. *He’s more considerate than anyone gives him credit for.*

When we walked in, sobering ever so slightly I questioned, “what am I even supposed to pack? I’ve barely ever been out of New York, what sorta stuff do I need?” At his raised eyebrows, I defended, “I’ve only traveled far once! And that was for you!”

Hand on the back of his neck, “yeah that’s true. And that wasn’t a vacation, was it?” Though he phrased it as a question, he knew the answer was clear.

“It was my first time out of the country! It was cool!” I tried to bring the smile that slipped off his face back. *He deserves all the smiles.*

Going over to my overly large closet, *like really he knows I don't have that many clothes* , he pulled out a suitcase I could have sworn I've never seen before. I gaped at him, "that suitcase was definitely not there before, are you sure you're not the one that's the wizard."

Tossing the luggage onto my bed, "you never know what's up my sleeve," he winked at me. To which I attempted to give a witty comeback, but ultimately ended up as a laugh instead as I snatched up some clothes from my dresser. He did not hesitate to begin packing my clothes for me as I went back to grab socks from the dresser. I did not miss the small smile on his face.

As I threw each pair of socks into the suitcase from where I was standing, as if I was playing basketball, before picking up the rest of the necessary clothes.

Placing the clothing next to the suitcase, I assisted in packing, I asked, "where does Clint even live anyway?" Realizing my packing skills were literal crap compared to his, I pulled out the pair of pants I had placed in and refolded it.

I did not even need to look up to just feel that he was smirking, "now that is classified information, kiddo."

I gave an oh so very scandalized gasp, "Classified!" I put my hand on my heart as I stared at him mouth wide, "you would keep classified information from your own-from me!" *Maybe he didn't notice my slip.*

"Yes even from my own son," he did not miss my slip, "only the Avengers know where Clint lives."

I had to activity try to force myself not to smile, but I just could not really help it, *and I'm not mad at that fact* , "what am I if I'm not an Avenger! How can Iron Man be my dad and I'm still not an Avenger!" I crossed my arms in mock anger.

Zippping the suitcase closed upon finishing packing, "you're a Spider-Baby, we can't have a Baby on the team."

Arms still crossed, "didn't I tell you it's Spider- *Man* , and such an amazing Spider- *Man* belongs on the same team as Iron *Man* ."

He rolled his eyes with just as much fondness as a smile, “we’ll see. Petey, I’m gonna go pack Peppers bag for her, she’s got enough on her plate as it is,” *how can anyone say he’s a bad guy?* “You just need a bag with your toiletries and whatever you wanna bring for entertainment. I already got a travel shower kit for you, so just grab a toothbrush and hairbrush.”

He gave me a quick hair ruffle after I responded with an ‘okie dokie’, with that, he departed. Grabbing my backpack, I tossed in the hairbrush from my nightstand before heading to the bathroom to get the rest of the toiletries.

A thought occurred as I began gathering my art supplies, *I’ll be without a blade for a whole weekend. Here, I don’t get the urge as much but when I do, I know I can find something to relieve it if it really gets to that point. I don’t- I don’t know that I will have that same access there.*

*What happens if I can’t have relief when I get the urge?*

Friday still monitors me though, at least I have not heard otherwise. *I can last a weekend though. I’ll be fine. I’ll be with both of my parents, and it’s a vacation, vacations are meant to relax.*

Placing my art materials in the bag, I zipped it up. No need for extra items. *Right?* Right.

## Chapter End Notes

I’ve been really struggling with my mental health lately, writing fell off to one of my last priorities. This chapter isn’t great, I’m just glad I finally got myself to write at all. This was one of the funnest, if not the funnest chapters I’ve ever written for this story. :) It was really nice to try to write something so light. I have a lot of ideas for the next chapter so hopefully I’ll have that up in a reasonable amount of time  
Thank you LittleMissAgrafina for encouraging me to write :)



## a blade

### Chapter Notes

Tw for self harm

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

With all bags ready, Happy helped our little family pack the car for the airport. It was only when seeing all the suitcases together I realized they were all a matching hot rod red. *Classic.*

Turning to, as Dad so affectionately dubbed, the Forehead of Security, “Happy, where’s your bag?”

Closing the trunk he answered, “I’m not coming with this time, Boss Jr.” *Implying there will be more times? I mean like, I guess families do vacation. It’s not like May, Uncle Ben, and I didn’t vacation, but that was only just barely out of the city for a night or two and it was just filled with yelling and anger and irritability and screaming and god will this be like that?*

*No, no it wouldn’t, neither Mom or Dad yell at me. The only time Dad ever even snapped at me since I’ve lived here is when I ran off and he thought...he thought I was actually gone.*

*This vacation will be different. It has to be.*

I let out a sound akin to a whine, *but obviously not an actual whine*, “awe why not? How can we have a family vacation without you?” Realizing what I implied I could not help the blush I’m sure as red at the suitcases that flooded into my cheeks.

Breaking out into a genuine smile, Happy put a hand on my shoulder that did not have my backpack slung over it, “next time.”

I smiled back, “next time,” I agreed. Before we could finally get into the car, a voice called out.

“Leaving without me?” Natasha walked through the garage for us, pulling a suitcase of her own with her. I did not even have to voice my question for her to answer, “you wouldn’t think I would miss a chance to see my niece and nephews, would you?”

Leaning over, my dad whispered to me, “honorary niece and nephews.” *As if that makes them any less family.*

Ignoring him, I focused on Natasha, “I’m glad you’re coming,” I grinned. *The more people there are, the less likely I am to be alone* ; a selfish part of me whispered.

I reopened the trunk for her as Happy got into the driver's seat to escort us, once she placed her own luggage within the overly expensive car I closed it once again. With that, we all filed into the car, Natasha in shotgun, politely allowing my parents and I to all sit together in back.

Though my dad's fiancé was on her Stark tablet, presumably working. Watching her type at a speed I doubt my fingers could ever reach, I asked, “will you have to work over the weekend?”

Dragging her eyes from the screen she replied, “if I can finish replying to these emails on the plane, then by the time we arrive at the farm I should be free to relax,” though her face was wrinkled in stress, she still gave me a soft smile. I almost forgot we were taking a plane. *Almost.*

“I’ll leave you be then,” I shifted to lean with my head on my dad's shoulder, as I was sitting between him and my mom.

*I haven’t been on a plane since-since I was fighting the Vulture. That plane crashed... but this plane won’t. Right? I mean this is a Stark plane, of course it won’t crash.*

*But so was the other one, that was a really important Stark plane and it still crashed. The Vulture crashed it though, he did it from the outside, the plane would have never fallen on its own. So that means this plane will not fall either. Of course it won’t.*

*Unless unless someone found out we’ll be taking it. Iron Man has dozens of enemies there are definitely people who would want to take him out... even if that means killing his soon to be wife and his son...*

No, no, this is insane. If I said these kinda things out loud, I’d sound like a crazy person. I’m not crazy, I’m not. *I’m just scared.*

As if he could sense my thoughts being too loud loud *loud loud loud* , he whispered, “you seem anxious.” It was not a question.

*I can not ruin this for him, his last vacation before his honeymoon.*

Come to think of it, I don’t recall him ever having a real vacation, one with no superhero business or Stark Industry meetings. And definitely not one with Pepper. I can’t tarnish his chance to be free and relax...

“Is nothing,” I mumbled, staring down at the backpack I clutched in my lap. Though I could feel him looking at me, I did not dare relax my hands, better hurting my bag than anything else more deserving.

I could hear the frown in his voice, “it’s clearly not nothing,” *I’m really making him upset, this is supposed to be a happy time and I’m ruining it* , “if you want to talk about anything, I’m here for you okay?”

*But he shouldn’t have to be, he should not have my weight on him, especially not on a vacation. It’s one thing for me to not get a break from my mind, but he should be able to get a break from my constant bad mindset.*

“Thank you,” I murmured back to him. *I’ll be fine though, he can rest.*

We stayed in relative silence for the rest of the ride, Happy eventually turned on the radio to have something to fill the lack of conversation. After who knows how long, we finally pulled up to a practically empty airport. *Must be private.* One lone plane looked ready for take off, at the sight I could not help the hard pinch in my chest. Letting out a shaky breath, I sat up. Instinctually, I yanked my sweatshirt sleeves over my hands, as if it would help me hide from the plane.

*Oh god the plane, oh god, oh god...*

Happy pulled the car up to a stop right next to the airplane, quickly getting out to help get the luggage from the truck. Though multiple workers who had been waiting for us came over and retrieved the suitcases, putting them away for us. I followed Tony out of the car, still clutching my backpack like a life preserver, *as if I could ever stay afloat.*

Natasha did not wait for anyone, just going straight up the stairs into the passenger compartment. After thanking Happy, Pepper followed suit, still somehow typing furiously as she walked.

“Bye Happy,” I almost choked on my labored breathing. Though he frowned at my flushed face and death grip on my bag, he gave me a wish for a restful vacation. My feet stayed rooted to the ground as Tony gave his goodbye. Flashing his classic smile, my dad thanked the workers, before putting his hand on my back to lead me up the stairs.

*Oh god please let the plane stay in the air.*

My hands were beginning to ache from clenching too hard, but I did not loosen my muscles. *I deserve the pain, I'm panicking over nothing.*

If my dad was not helping me up the staircase, I'm certain I would not have moved an inch. Breath shallow and chest tighter than a noose I took shaky step after step.

Tony whispered, “you got this kiddo,” as if he knew why my mind is being so stupid. *I'm pathetic.* Stepping into the plane, I took the seat furthest from the women, who had already sat down, Natasha reading a book and Pepper engrossed in her work. Though I was away from his fiancé, Tony still sat down at the seat across from me. *He must not want to sit in the chair next to me. I can't blame him. No, no, I'm lucky he wants to be by me at all.*

Setting my bag in my lap, my fists still clenched on themselves, nails digging into my palms. *I should have just brought my blade.* No, no, I'm supposed to be better. I'm supposed to not want to do the bad things. I'm not supposed to be like this...

Pressing my nails just slightly harder, I let out a breath, I retracted from my skin before I caused blood to dribble out. *Too obvious.* Adjusting the backpack, I made sure it blocked Tony's view. Slowly, I stuck my right hand up my left sleeve, keeping the hands covered but giving me access. Sticking my nails into the flesh I dragged them over my skin, scratching the skin away. *I need to focus, focus, focus.* Repeating the process a bit faster, I ripped away more skin, not hesitating to scratch again right after.

As the plane lifted out I jammed my nails into my wrist so hard I was almost surprised my nails did not get stuck.

*This is better, this isn't bad. It's focus, it's deserving, it's better. How can this be worse than*

*panicking over a stupid pl-over something stupid?*

Piercing my wrist harder, I scratched again. And again. Again. Again. Again. Again.

Without thinking, without stopping to look at the damage I was causing I kept going. Though the plane was getting to a safe cruising altitude, I did not cease.

A voice interrupted my actions, “hey Pete, what’s going on,” only pausing momentarily, I slowed the scratching, but did not lessen the pressure.

Not looking up, I answered “nothing. ‘M okay.” *I can’t stop, I can’t. If I stop then I’ll, I’ll panic and that’s bad, panicking is bad. I need to keep going.* Digging my nails even deeper I desperately ripped at the skin, ignoring the small beads of liquid I felt on my wrist.

Narrowing his eyes, before they quickly widened, “oh Peter...”

*What? No, no, he couldn’t possibly know, he couldn’t. I’m being quiet, I’m barely moving. There’s no way he could know. Just because the bloody smell fills my nose, doesn’t mean he could possibly smell it, I’m the one with the enhanced senses, not him.*

Eyes soft, “Peter, what are you doing over there?” I desperately blinked back the hot tears that pressed at my eyes at the question.

“Nothing,” I choked on the word, “‘m nothing.” *I didn’t bother trying to correct that statement.*

Though I knew he knew, I could not keep myself from continuing, getting in every bit of pain I could before I would be forced to stop. I’m not even sure if he could tell or not, but either way he stood up.

*If I keep my hands in my sleeves he’ll know for sure, but if I take my hand out then he could see blood and still know. There’s no way to hide this.*

*I trapped myself.*

As he approached me, I leaned back, stilling my hand but keeping the nails piercing my wrist.

“Peter,” he repeated, as if he ran out of words for once.

Before he could continue, I blurted out, “‘m sorry.” *What for, not even I could say.*

Though I could feel Natasha and Pepper watching, I did not meet their eyes nor Tony’s. Instead of looming over me, he sat in the empty chair next to me.

Looking me in the eyes, instead of staring at my still sleeve covered arms, “May I see?” He asked quiet enough that only I could hear. *No, no, no one can see. The scratches, they’re mine, only mine. He can’t see, he’ll stop caring if he sees. If I say no though, will he still force me? He can’t-he wouldn’t be like May? Right?*

I frantically shook my head ‘no’. *I can’t let him see.*

He let out a deep breath, “I’m not going to force you to show me, okay? I know that’ll only make you trust me less,” *I wish I could deny that*, “if I give you a first aid kit, can I trust you to take care of it yourself? We can talk after that.” Though I repeated his words in my head a few times, I still could not tell whether the last part was a question or not.

I nodded. *This is as good as it can get.*

With that, he stood up, motioning for me to follow. My legs shook as I followed him to the back of the plane. He entered the restroom first, digging through a cabinet. Once finding what he was looking for, he placed the first aid kit on the sink and exited. It was after I entered the bathroom and closed the door that I heard him walk back to his seat.

*Oh god oh god I already ruined his vacation. God, how could I be so stupid?*

*I can’t waste time, he’ll just think-he’ll think I’m just hurting myself more. I can’t blame him though...*

Pulling up my sleeve I felt my throat close when seeing all the scratches. Some of them with little spots of blood, none of them dripped at least, *I don't know if that's good or not*. Some were just red, some looked puffy almost, tracing my fingers over those scratches they felt almost hard.

Turning on the sink, I let the water reach a reasonable temperature before putting my arm under. I had to bite my lip at the sudden burning spreading over my arm from the water. *Ironic*.

Though not all the blood washed away, I pulled my arm back anyway. Snatching up some tissues from the box on the counter, I gently dabbed my arm dry. I pried the first aid kit open, finding some wrap and some bandaids. *There's only a few scratches bleeding. Band-aids are probably more discreet anyway...*

Bandaging my still burning arm, I yanked the sleeve back down. *God, now I need to talk to him... he's probably so mad. I can't blame him though, it's my fault. If I stay here though he'll only get more pissed...*

*If I had just brought my blade I could have come in here and cut and Tony would never know, I wouldn't have ruined anything.*

Oh my god I'm so stupid. *I could have just scratched in here.*

If I wasn't wasting so much time, I would have dragged my nails over my stupid arm again. *I need to face him though...*

With everything cleaned up, I exited the bathroom.

## Chapter End Notes

I'm not happy with how this chapter turned out, I am glad I finally posted though. My mental health has been really depleting, making writing even harder. I'll still try to update more consistently but I can't promise anything. I hope y'all are doing well. Thank you for reading :)

## to get my bearings

### Chapter Notes

Tw for talk of self harm

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Exiting the bathroom, I could feel my chest tighten with every step. *I shouldn't be so scared to face my own dad.* Walking up to him, hands trembling, I did not need to look at him to feel the sadness radiating off of him. That did not stop me from looking at him though, taking in the deep frown and the wrinkles set on his face. *I'm not sure if I've ever seen him look so old.*

*God I disappointed him. I did this to him, he shouldn't be so sad, he shouldn't be. Especially not on his vacation, I ruined it. I ruined it, I ruin everything. I deserve his disappointment, I deserve his anger and shame and I deserve to be punished.*

Before I could sit down, he asked, “did you do what I asked?” At my nod, the creases in his forehead seemed to lessen ever so slightly, “I’m proud of you.”

That’s when I finally spoke, “What?” I exclaimed, I did not mean to speak so loudly. *Too loud, too much, I’m too much.* Even if Pepper and Natasha were hard of hearing they would have been able to hear my stupid question. Finally sitting down, I continued, voice lowered this time, “I-I don’t understand. How could you be proud of me? I, you know what I did, I did... a bad thing.”

His eyes somehow softened even more, “I know, Pete, I know you didn’t do a good thing,” I didn’t miss him avoiding my choice of words, “But then you took care of yourself after, even though I know it must be so hard for you, and I’m proud of you for that,” I couldn’t help but be thankful he also spoke low enough to save me more embarrassment and shame. Tony’s disappointing looks are already too much, I can not take them from Pepper and Natasha too.

*Unless he already told Pepper, spouses are supposed to communicate with each other right? No secrets? When I was in the bathroom he could have told her, she could already be so so disappointed in me. She could regret wanting to adopt someone like me, I’m a mess, a broken mess.*

I whispered, “Does Pepper know?”, I refused my voice to crack as the hot tears pressed against my eyes once again. *Can I ever go a day without crying?*



“No, no Pete, she doesn’t. And she won’t if you do not want her to. This is your private information, no one has to know if you don’t want them to.” *God, I hope that’s true.* He continued, “Kid, I need you to know, that yeah I’m not happy that you did this,” *oh god I screwed up, I screwed up so badly,* “but I’m not mad or disappointed in you. You weren’t in a good mindset,” *aren’t, I corrected in my head,* “you did what you could to try to stay calm. If you can talk about it, I’d like to know what triggered the spiral.”

Letting out a shaky breath, “I’m sorry, I-I’m not sure how to explain it.”

He gently pressed, “do you know what triggered it?” My only response was a jerky nod, “kid, if this is triggering to talk about, then we can another time.”

*No, no, I can’t spend the whole vacation worrying about this talk. I won’t be able to relax, as if I would be able to anyway, but still. I still need to give myself my best chance.*

I shook my head, “no, no if I don’t do this now I won’t be able to.” He did not question me on that. He stayed quiet while I failed at evening out my breathing. “My thoughts are mean,” I whispered. *God I sound like a childish idiot.*

Before he could respond, I went on, “they don’t stop, they never stop. I can’t get a break. I knew, I knew being on the plane would be bad, but it shouldn’t have been so bad. My mind makes everything that should be small so so big.”

Instead of remarking on my stupid childishness, he questioned, “why did you know the plane would be bad.”

“Planes crash,” if I wasn’t furiously wiping at the insistent tears escaping out of my eyes, I may have tried to give a more complete answer. Though he pulled me as close he could in the awkward position on the plane seats, I could practically see the gears turning in his head trying to decipher my cryptic answer.

It took him a moment before he breathed out, “oh god, Peter, the Vul-” I did not mean to let out a sob at just the thought of the name. Carding his fingers through my hair, he whispered, “you’re safe, kid, you’re safe. He can’t get you,” I did not mean to let out another sob. *But I can’t help it.*

“I-I’m sorry,” I gasped out between sobs, “I’m so sorry.” *I’m not even sure what I’m sorry for*

*anymore.* “I’m, I’m sorry.”

Holding me tighter, but not suffocatingly, “shh,” he hushed me, “you have nothing to be sorry for.” *I have everything to be sorry for.* “You’re safe, I won’t let him get you. I won’t let the plane crash, I’ll protect you.” He did not let me go, did not stop his comforting words as I gasped out sob after pathetic sob. He did not lessen his hold on me even as I cried through his shirt, *I’m disgusting*, he just continued running his fingers through my sweaty hair.

As I cried myself out, I felt my body feel heavier, eyes drooping. As if he could read my mind, maybe he could at this point, my dad whispered “it’s okay, Pete. You can sleep, I’ll protect you.” If I hadn’t just cried so much I would have fought the call of sleep, but unconsciousness is just too tempting.

...

Feeling the weight of sleep, Tony finally let out a breath. One arm wrapped tightly around his kid, the other still carding his fingers through Peter’s hair. Finally dragging his eyes away from the sleeping kid, he met eyes with Pepper, staring over at them eyes filled with as much worry as Tony himself.

She did not dare voice her endless questions, not wanting to risk waking Peter, but in their gaze a thousand words were exchanged.

He did not need to look at Natasha to know she noticed everything that had gone on over the last several minutes. Though all of them just sat there, the only sound being Peter’s deep breathing.

Tony could only silently pray that god would let his kid sleep through the rest of the flight.

...

I wasn’t sure what woke me up, until my mind finally recognized the feeling of the plane descending. I launched myself out of the chair, ignoring Tony’s exclamation, “oh my god!” as I quickly tried to get back my bearings.

My dad was quick to follow me, putting his hands on my shoulders, “kid, hey kid, it’s okay.” I furiously shook my head, trying to back away from him. *We need to escape! Why doesn’t he*

*understand, we need to get away!*

“Peter, Peter you’re okay, we’re landing. This isn’t a crash, we’re safe,” though his voice was calm, his eyes looked just as panicked as my own. Putting his hands back on my shoulders after I had backed away from him, “Peter, look at me,” though my entire body was trembling I finally met his gaze, “you’re safe, okay? We are landing, we’re arrived at the farm.”

Finally stilling, “I’m sorry,” I mumbled.

Pulling me back into a hug, “I know you are, kid.” He helped me sit back down, while the plane continued its descension. Before I knew what was happening he was gently grabbing my hands, holding them. Only then I realized I had been digging my nails into my palms, *I didn’t mean to* . Before I could say anything he assured me, “you don’t need to apologize.”

Until the plane completed its landing, he did not let go of my hands. *I can’t blame him though*. Natasha stood first, the rest of us following, my legs still quaking but this time I don’t have the excuse of the moving plane screwing up my balance. As soon as the door was opened, Natasha exited the plane, Pepper, however, waited for Tony and I. As I started to walk towards my mom, Tony handed me my backpack, I immediately clutched it even harder than I did my dad’s hands.

Pepper exited first, Tony behind me, hand on my back helping guide me out of that god forsaken plane. When the fresh air flooded my nose I finally was able to take a deep breath, looking around it really was a legitimate farm. I wasn’t sure if Tony jokes that everyone who lives in the middle of nowhere is a farmer, sue me.

Before we even made it down the steps, Natasha was already holding a little boy, no older than a toddler, and hugging two other kids with her other arm, a boy and a girl. I recognized Clint, having seen him briefly at the airport. *Wait, the airport, he wouldn’t be mad at me for that right? I mean, Bucky and Sam weren’t and they were the ones I fought the most. And I mean, Clint wouldn’t have let us stay here if he was mad at us for the whole airport thing, right?*

*Unless he just wanted to see Natasha, but then she could have just come herself right?*

Pepper, once again waited for the rest of our little family, before we walked towards our hosts together. Only then did I notice Pepper wasn’t still on her laptop or Starkpad, maybe she finished her work like she said.

Both Clint and the woman, I assume his wife, sported welcoming smiles to us, which ever so slightly eased the tightness in my throat.

Tony greeted first, “hey Legolas,” reaching out to shake Clint’s hand.

“Hey Tony,” Clint rolled his eyes at dad.

Pepper nodded politely at him, “Hello Clint,” he gave a hello and nodded back, before Pepper turned to his wife and hugged her, “Laura, how are you?”

As they caught up, Clint turned to me, “so you must be Tony’s spawn, you finally got sick of him and wanted to stay with obviously the best Avenger?” He chuckled at his own joke.

“Yeah, I mean no, I mean-” Tony cut off my anxious stumbling, saving me. *He did say he’d protect me after all.*

“Well Merida, if he needed a reminder of who the best Avenger is he would of just had to look at his amazing dad.” Somehow he always knows the right thing to say, succeeding in getting another good humored eye roll out of Clint.

“You keep telling yourself that,” as Clint and dad continued their banter I felt a small tug on the back of my shirt.

Turning around the little girl stood in front of me, she couldn’t have been more than seven or eight years old. “Are you here to play with us?” She asked, eyes big.

I felt my lips grow into a smile, not quite so forced as the smile I had given her dad, “yeah I’ll play with you.” She grabbed my arm upon my answer, I had to bite my lip to keep from reacting as she held my raw wrist.

Before she could lead me anywhere though, the woman talking to Pepper called over, “Lila, he just got here, give him a second to settle in. Why don’t you and Cooper show him his room?” Lila immediately dropped my arm at her moms instruction, running over to the porch where Natasha sat with a boy seeming a little older than Lila, and the toddler in her lap. While Lila got the older boy, their mother turned to me, a smile I could only describe as motherly on her face, “I’m Laura.”

“I’m Peter,” I tried to smile back, still clutching my backpack.

Before we could say another word, Lila and probably Cooper ran over to me, “we’ll show you your room!” The boy exclaimed, following Lila who was already running into the house. I quickly followed suit, easily catching up to the kids as they brought me into their home.

## Chapter End Notes

Oh my word I hit 100k words I literally never never saw that coming. Before this fic the longest thing I had ever written in my life had been 75k words and I thought that was the best I could do and I’ve happily been proved wrong.

My mental health still sucks, I do have the next chapter planned out so hopefully that one will be easier to write and hopefully will come out sooner. I’ll keep trying.

Okay well I researched to try to find around what ages the Barton kids would be if this fic is set after Homecoming but i didn’t find anything very useful so I based this on the actors ages and then subtracted like four years cuz that’s when civil war came out. So I’m gonna say Nathaniel is about 2, Lila is about 8, and Cooper is about 10. I have no idea if that’s accurate but whatever let’s pretend.

And just for the record I’m gonna say Cassie Lang is about 8 because she’s like 9 in ant man and the wasp and that’s two years after civil war. Time lines are rough.

Thank you so much LittleMissAgrafina for all the help and encouragement, I would not have gotten this chapter out without your help

## a spider

### Chapter Notes

Tw mentions of past self harm

This chapter is for you MarvelObsessedgirl3 ;)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Lila and Cooper gave me a very in depth explanation that I would be sleeping in Cooper's room, clearly, and he would obviously be having a sleepover with Lila, my mom and dad would have a spare bedroom together, and Natasha would be staying in 'her room', whatever that meant. Y'know I thought I was the one who spoke too fast.

Surprisingly, they actually did listen to their mother and give me a chance to breathe, Lila suddenly exclaiming she has to show Auntie Nat her new nerf bow before running off, Cooper on her heels. Collapsing onto the soft bed sheets, head in my hands I forced my breathing *in and out, in...in and out, in and and, in and...out*.

*That's deep enough.*

What felt like only minutes after the kids dashed out of my room, Cooper was sprinting back in, insisting it's dinner time. Like his sister he grabbed onto me, thankfully my hand instead of my wrist, and yanked me downstairs with him while he babbled on about how great his mom's cooking is.

I spent the dinner silently watching Lila show her, what she and the other kids switched between calling Auntie Nat and Aunt Tasha, all the dozens of art pieces she made since last seeing her. Cooper occasionally intervened to tell his Aunt a funny story he remembered. I could not have been more thankful to just listen, no pressure to talk.

Though, after the immense stack of art had been gifted to Natasha, Lila turned to me, beaming as she handed me a single drawing.

"I drew it while you were upstairs!" She explained, as I looked over the cute scribbly drawing of me holding an archery bow as big as my body.

Smiling at her, “it looks great, thank you so much. You’re a great artist.”

She soaked in the praise like a sponge, smiling even brighter as she handed similar drawings to my parents. The dinner went on pretty similarly, the kids finding ways to fill every lapse in conversation.

Thankfully at the end, when Pepper and Tony insisted they clean up, allowing me to spend time with the Barton’s, they did not comment on my still almost full plate of food. *I swear, the meal was delicious, I just, I couldn’t do it. As thankful as I am for the minimum amount of human interaction I’ve been able to have, my throat just, it just won’t ease up. Usually my chest is the one tight as a coil, what is wrong with me?*

Because my dad knows everything, he told Clint, while the stubborn archer insistently helped clean the dishes, *I think he just did it to annoy my dad*, that our little family would have an early night tonight. To get used to the time change, of course. *He gave me an escape.*

Though I was not sure if Tony and Pepper actually went to bed, I took refuge in Cooper's room. *Maybe an early night wouldn’t be so bad, I mean unconscious is better than conscious right?*

After way too long laying in the too small bed I finally was able to drift off.

*Bad idea.*

*Everything I do is always a bad idea, the wrong decision, stupid thought.* As if waking up with tears already on my cheeks was not enough my chest was too tight to just breathe. Breathing shouldn’t be so hard, right?

*In and, in in and, in and god why can’t I release in and in and god just breathe out already, in and in in and god please, in and-*

Sitting up, I quickly fled the room. No thought, no plan, I just needed to *get out!*

Retracing the steps Lila rushed me through that morning, I went down the stairs as silently as I could. *God where is the door?!* I went room to room trying to find any escape I could. Not before I was ready to break out a window I found the door to the back lawn, and of course it’s locked. *Can nothing ever be simple?* It took me a few too many aggravating seconds to open the stupid door.

When I finally yanked the awful thing open I didn't bother worrying if the door was broken by my stupidly excessive amount of strength, *why couldn't I be that strong emotionally?* The door is a problem for later, screw later.

Hot air tried to fill my lungs *in and, in and...and out, in in, in...and out.*

Pacing through the yard, fingers tracing over the bandaids protecting my ruined skin, *I mean my wrist looks like a feral cat tried to maul me*, I attempted to focus on my breathing. It really should not be so impossible.

I did not mean to jump when the voice sounded all of a sudden, "I thought you were a spider, not an owl." Part of me could not help but wonder how not only my super hearing but my spidey sense could not notice Natasha coming up behind me. Then again, the spidey sense only feels threats.

Before I could try to find an excuse of why I'm wondering around my hosts backyard in the middle of the night like an insane person, she assured me, "don't worry I won't tell on you."

I furrowed my brows, "you won't?" *She has every reason to, I'm being stupid, I made another wrong decision. Just bad idea upon bad idea.*

She shrugged, walking over to lean against the nearby fence, "it's not my place. Wanna talk?" She said it so casually, as if offering to handle my messed up weight is so simple and easy. *Is it easier for other people?*

I followed her, leaning against the fence beside her. *It's easier not having to make eye contact. Maybe she knows that already.*

She started talking, letting me listen while I tried to force my breathing to stay somewhat effective, "I grew up trained to be a killer, an assassin. I grew up forced to do unspeakable crimes."

I did not dare ask where she was going with this, I'm not sure if it was because I trusted she had a point or because I was too anxious to interrupt.

She continued on, "I had nothing, no control, I needed to control something in my life. My hip



became my next victim, discreet enough no one would notice.” She said it so plainly, like she was talking about how beautiful the stars are, *god you can see how many more stars here than at home.*

I kept both my hands on the fence I leaned against, not daring harm myself, “Even when Shield found me, and I began to have control again, I still felt like I needed to punish myself. A cut for every life I destroyed, a cut for every sin I committed, a cut for every spot of blood on my ledger.”

*She’s like me.*

I did not bother to ask why she brought up the topic. She is a spy afterall. *Dad wouldn’t have gone behind my back to tell her.* And it’s not like I was not a complete utter mess in the plane, anyone could have guessed.

“For me, it wasn’t until I found a purpose, a good thing to do and try to be that I finally could see I don’t need to punish myself. It’s not easy, even now it’s not easy. But it’s worth it to work towards,” she kept her eyes forward, for my benefit I assume. She didn’t seem to mind me not responding, she’s observant to tell all my attention is on her, her story.

Her tone became softer, like it was less distant, “I know Tony has his self destructive habits, but no one who hasn’t actually self harmed like this really can fully comprehend what it’s like, the mindset, the addiction. Just know, I’m here. To talk, to listen, to just sit around, I can even show you some sparring moves if you want.” With that i could tell she was done with her monologue.

It took me a moment to come up with any response, she did not wane patience, “Thank you. For everything,” that’s not enough of a thank you, “thank you for not being mad at me, for talking, trusting me, thank you for being here for me.” Part of me was shocked I could actually come up with any words at all.

She finally looked at me, an ever so subtle smile gracing her lips, “How could the Black Widow not help out the baby spider?” I actually let out a small laugh at that.

I gave just as small of a smile, but no less real, “You’re like a mom spider.”

To that she let out a laugh, something so much softer than I could have ever expected. *Maybe I did something right.*

## Chapter End Notes

Well this is all of the energy I had left today. As always, didn't proof read so, sorry.  
Thank you LittleMissAgrafina and MarvelObsessedgirl3 for all the ideas :)  
Thank you for reading

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Though Natasha and I had not talked for too much longer after she confessed she was like me, I still had not gotten an ample amount of sleep. At least judging by the amount of yawns cutting off my sentences or how my eyes somehow find a way to keep on closing no matter how many times I try to blink the exhaustion away.

After a breakfast full of over excited babbling from all three kids talking over each other, we sat in the family room playing board games. While Lila stuck her tongue out at me when I beat her in Connect Four, after losing four games in a row against her, because she is *obviously* the most talented Connect Four player in the world, Cooper suddenly announced, “I have an idea!” Before anyone could comprehend what he was talking about, he threw down his Go Fish cards. Which made the women and Nathaniel giggle at his antics, while he ran over to his dad and grabbed his hand, dragging him away from his and Tony’s incredibly intense game of chess.

Cooper ran out of the room, dragging Clint along with him into the kitchen. I ignored the kid's excitement, giving him his privacy, as I focused on Lila *totally* not cheating by putting in two red pieces in a row before I took my turn. I could not help the smile on my face, looking at her fondly.

“I have an idea!” Cooper bounded back into the room, his dad grinning, shaking his head, behind him. The kid did not wait for anyone to respond before making his announcement, “tonight! Instead of lunch *and* dinner, we will have one mega meal! We will have a huge barbecue! To cel’brate your last day here!” He got louder with each phrase, literally bouncing in excitement.

*Though this is our last full day here, it’s not like we are leaving tonight. We still have breakfast tomorrow to hang out, but it’s still sweet of him to want to celebrate.*

Lila hopped up from her spot on the ground, “really daddy?!” She ran into Clint’s already open arms, he just knows her so well, that thought alone made my smile grow. “We haven’t had a barbecue in *forever* !” She groaned while she laughed.

Nathaniel clapped, though I was not completely sure he knew what was going on.

Picking up his daughter, Clint told, “though I might need some help preparing for this *mega* meal. Peter,” he turned to me, “have you ever grilled before?”

*Ben and May did not even have a stove top grill.*

I shook my head, “no I haven’t ever.”

Picking up Cooper in his other arm, one kid per hip, “whaddya say we all go outside and not waste this beautiful weather, then the kids and I can prepare the feast. Tony, make sure you don’t miss hanging with the fellow kids,” he winked at my dad, to which he rolled his eyes.

*I assume I count as one of ‘the kids’.*

“Sounds nice,” I smiled, standing up.

Laura followed suit, picking up Nathaniel with her, “Nate and I can make desert then, right buddy?” She nuzzled him, giving him a nose kiss, to which he kissed her on the nose.

Pepper giggled at the pair, “I can help with the dessert too.” To which Natasha also agreed.

“Wow, lucky duck, you get to hang out with all the women,” Tony chuckled at the boy.

Lila let out a gasp, “what about me! I’m a women!” She protested.

Clint did not miss a beat to prevent a possible tantrum, “you are a wom *an* , Lila dear, but you are just so special you get to help with the BBQ instead.”

She let out a sweet ‘oh’, content with her dad’s answer. Before anyone could say anything Cooper started tugging on his dad’s shirt, silently whining, “I’ll take these crazy little monkeys outside now.”

With a quick peck on the lips, to Lila’s and Cooper’s disguise, Laura exited to the kitchen, the fellow women following suit. Tony, arm wrapping around my shoulder like it just belonged there, we walked outside after the Bartons.

Going outside, to everyone's surprise, the kids asked Tony to play with them. Before he could even answer, they were already babbling on about a game they invented. As they dragged my dad off to go play, Clint turned to me, asking if I've ever done archery.

I shook my head, "no, I've never tried."

"Wanna try? I'll teach you," he offered. To my agreement, he led me to a shed.

*Though part of me was so nervous to have it just Clint and I. Obviously, I know he's not going to hurt me I just, he's so chill but so caring but he jokes around a lot but there always seems to be more to him like I just can't figure him out, what the hell?*

As Dad was chasing around Lila and Cooper, Clint opened up the shed. He pulled out a bow, one larger than I've ever seen before, even on tv.

He explained, "Normally I would have people try a regular bow, because my bow string is too tight for most people to pull back. But as I saw you at the airport and know what you can do, I think you can use one of my old bows."

*He trusts me to use one of his personal bows.*

He handed me the bow, heavier than I had expected, "Before I just have you shooting around, we should go through the parts of the bow and how to set up," I nodded along, "Safety is the first priority, fun is second," he winked.

He went through each part of the bow, explaining what it was and why it is important, *successfully appealing to my scientist side that just needs to know how everything works*, before he finally showed me how to shoot.

He pulled an even larger bow from his shed, "this is my latest Hawkeye bow," it made my bow look like a little kids toy. Then he walked us over about twenty feet from a tree, saying that's our target, first shooting the tree perfectly center, to show me the form he uses.

He only had to make a few adjustments to my stance and form before he let me shoot. The string was definitely tighter than I anticipated but still nothing for my level of strength.

First arrow and I missed the tree completely, “Hey that’s okay, it’s only your arrow. Let’s try again, yeah?”

I nodded, and once again he fixed my form, helping me aim, this time I got it on the side of the bottom of the tree. *How could I have not shot it hard enough? I’m literally Spider-Man.*

From his place being attacked by two little kids, my dad called out, “you got this Petey!”

I gave him a smile, “thanks!”

For the next arrow Clint didn’t have to fix my form, saying I’m learning quick, this time I got the side of the tree. We kept on going, my arrows hitting closer and closer to center until Clint announced its time to prepare for the meal.

After everyone washed their hands, Clint assigned the kids to put the dry rub on the meat, successfully entertaining them in the messiness.

Clint turned to my dad, “Tony do *you* know how to grill?”

He scoffed, “I’m a genius of course I can figure out a grill.”

Clint smirked, “so in other words you have never grilled before and don’t know how.” His snark got me to smile, which only seemed to make his ego grow. “Well let the master teach you how it’s done.”

With that he turned into a teacher, taking every opportunity to exaggerate Tony being his *humble* student. Though both Tony and I picked up on what he was instructing quickly and together, with the assistance of the kids, we got the meal cooked.

Eventually we got the whole ‘feast’ done and ready, and *god* was the food good. We all crammed around a picnic table, even with a few foldable chairs to get everyone seated.

The 'feast' went similarly to breakfast, endless chatter from the kids as the adults and I listened fondly. Though Clint did make sure I 'properly bragged' to Pepper about my newfound skill in archery.

We stayed there talking and joking around until it was time for the kids to go to bed, but Clint said he gives me 'special permission' to stay up later than the kids bedtime. While Natasha and Laura fell into some deep conversation, Clint put the kids to bed.

While they were all busy I went in and grabbed my markers and notebook, bringing them outside for a little surprise for Lila. *She deserves a drawing after the utterly adorable one she gave me.*

Deciding to give the ladies their privacy I went over into the grass, drawing with the porch light illuminating the page.

I had barely started sketching when my dad came over and sat down next to me, no words were said but they didn't need to be. He just sat with me as I drew, not watching me, just with me. *He's practically a mind reader, I never had to tell him it's anxiety inducing to have people watch me draw.*

Soon Pepper was over with us too, sitting on the other side of me, just my parents and I. As soon as I finished the drawing, my head was on my dad's shoulder, all three of us just breathing in each other.

*Our little family.*

I'm not sure how long we were there as I guess I dozed off. Eventually my mom's soft voice sounded, hand on my shoulder waking me up, "Peter baby, I'm sorry you need to wake up."

I sat up, stretching, "m'kay," I yawned.

Dad whispered next, "Petey, you can pack in the morning if you'd rather."

"M not tired," I yawned again.

He stood up, "I'll help you then," he gave me a hand and pulled me up.

My mom stood up too, she gave me a kiss on the side of my head, wishing me sweet dreams. The other adults, who had been talking at the picnic table still, wished me a goodnight. With that, Tony led me inside.

Rubbing my eyes, I tried to wake myself up to be coherent enough to pack. Getting to my room, I sat on the bed, to which my dad joked, "you're gonna make me pack for you again, huh?" He grabbed my suitcase and put it on the bed next to me.

I smiled, rubbing the rest of the sleep from my eyes, "naw, I'm awake."

He smiled at me, as he began to put away my things for me into the suitcase. He was quiet for a moment before speaking again, "Peter, I have a question for you," *he never calls me by my full name, this must be really serious*, "but I know you may panic, I want you to try to let me finish before you start freaking out."

All remnants of tiredness were cut away instantly, I nodded, waiting for him to continue.

"I want to see what you think about not being a Stark."

*Oh god, oh god, he changed his mind, he doesn't want to adopt me, oh god, he doesn't want me anymore, I knew he wouldn't I knew he would change his mind, oh god.*

He sat down next to me, moving the suitcase away, "Peter, breathe, okay breathe with me, in and out," he exaggerated his breathing before he continued on, *well he was right that I would panic*, "Peter I know you're thinking I changed my mind, I didn't. You're still my son. I did not change my mind."

*Then then why won't I be a stark, does he not want me to have his last name, he doesn't want anyone to know I'm his, maybe maybe he's ashamed of me, I can't blame him.*

He finally continued, "Peter at the wedding I want to change me and your last name to Potts"



My brows furrowed, “Wa- what?”

He stayed patient, “I don’t want to be a stark anymore, and I don’t want you to be one either.”

I shook my head in confusion, *I don’t understand*.

He continued to explain, “The Stark name has had negative representation too long, I want it to end. Howard gave the Stark name a bad context, and as did I with the weapons,” before I can argue that he has given the Stark name good connotation, he went on, “This can be a complete fresh start. I want you to have a good life, to have a more normal life. I want the best for you, the best family.”

I asked, “We’re gonna be Potts?”

He smiled, soft and loving, “If you’re okay with it.”

I nodded, “yeah, yes”

*We’ll be Potts.*

## Chapter End Notes

I’m sorry this took so long to come out.

Thank you so so much LittleMissAgrafina for all the ideas and encouragement, I wouldn’t have gotten this chapter without you.

Well y’all, I started another fic in this series, which I know was a bad idea when I already have this fic and two other fics i am planning, but this one is definitely a guilty pleasure kinda fic and I love it. It’s supposed to be Peter’s journal, the one that I mention throughout this fic that Peter wrote lists in and stuff, but the other fic (What I Feel) actually goes into what is in his journal. So pretty much it is poetry and venting and me trying out different styles of writing. It doesn’t have a set chronological place in What Do I Need, it’s more of just a general thing from this version of Peter I created, with references to ideas from this fic (like weight and the snake). Since when writing stories with an actual plot, I really struggle at getting out decently lengthened chapters, dialogue, and having a plot, this fic is like everything I love about writing with thoughts and metaphors and all that Jazz. For the first time ever I have a fic I am posting a chapter every day (at least so far I am) and it’s actually really fun. Almost always the reason my chapters for this fic take so long to come out is mostly cuz either

my mindset is too bad to write or I'm too anxious or overwhelmed to write and so it's nice to have a story that is purely for fun.

And I started writing one shots again, I hadn't written a one shot in months before this and now I have four posted, I have been writing way way more than normal so I hope to get these chapters out quicker.

## a soft place to land

### Chapter Notes

Tw for mentions of past self harm and mild panic

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Somehow I managed to sleep through the night. Well, I only woke up once from a nightmare, but then I was able to fall back asleep until woken up again. This time calloused but gentle hands carded through my hair, a soft, “Underoos, time to wake up,” sounded.

I let out a groan, yet still shifted into his hand, absorbing his comfort. my dad let out a chuckle, “You can sleep on the way back, baby,” even with my brain fogged over my sleepiness, I did not miss how he left off the ‘spidey’ in the nickname spidey baby.

Through a yawn, I mumbled, “‘m not a baby,” though my voice was much too soft and tired to really be taken all that seriously. He moved his hand away from where he was running his fingers through my hair, to my dismay. “No,” I drew out the word in a whine.

Though my whining is probably annoying, *I’m always annoying*, he still let out a laugh, “later, I promise.” Though I don’t believe in promises, the thought still made me smile. “If you wanna shower before breakfast you have to get up now,” he told me while I wiggled my way into a sitting up position. Once he knew I was up and not going back to sleep, he left me to do my thing. Snatching up the first clothes I found, I wandered to the bathroom.

After a quick shower, the water finally waking me up fully, I dropped off my pajamas in the bedroom. Though before I left to go find my family and the others, I was hit by that feeling you’re forgetting something. *What could I be forgetting, all I had to do was shower and go downstairs?*

Pausing, I looked around the room, once my eyes landed on my sketchbook, it dawned on me. *Oh I’m stupid, I almost forgot Lila’s drawing.* After retrieving the artwork I finally made my way downstairs.

Before I even saw anyone I was met with an excited squeal, “Peter!” Lila shouted as she ran and jumped on me from behind, latching onto me like a koala. “You’re *finally* awake!”

I let out a laugh, “good morning to you too.”

Before she could see the paper I was trying to hide in my hand, her dad called over, “hey Hawkeye, let that poor boy go before you suffocate him,” though it was a command, it still ended with a laugh. Reluctantly she let go of me, while Clint continued on, “c’mon, it’s time for breakfast kids.” To which she bounded over to the dining room, not waiting for me to follow.

Breakfast went as expected, the kids all talking over one another, allowing me to just smile and listen to their cute babbling. Eventually though, Lila brought her attention back to me, “Peter, whatcha got there?” She finally noticed the paper in my lap, somehow.

Giving a quick glance back to my dad, to which he nodded, answering my silent question, “well Lila,” I began, watching her practically radiate excitement, “I wanted to give you a thank you gift for the *amazing* drawing you gave me.”

*God I hope she likes it.*

The second I handed her my drawing she was squealing in excitement. She immediately lunged over to me and gave me the tightest hug she could. If I didn’t have my super strength, I’m sure she would have cut off my breathing with how hard her arms were wrapped around my neck. I didn’t even bother suppressing my laughter.

After my sweet hug she ran off to go put the drawing in her room, to which Laura may have lightly suggested to Cooper to go play. With them gone, Natasha took that as her opportunity to make an announcement, “so, I’m gonna be staying here a few extra days, or however long, Tony,” well she’s always one to get straight to the point, “If you can send a plane or something to bring me back, that would be appreciated.” *God how am I supposed to go back in the plane?*

My dad did not even look surprised in the slightest, “you can stay however long Legolas lets you, as long as you’re back in time for the rehearsal,” he smiled.

*Rehearsal? Like the wedding rehearsal? Is it bad I don’t even really know what the rehearsal is about, I mean in Freaky Friday it seemed like a big deal.*

Voice quiet, as to not disturb Nastaha who was playing with Nathaniel, who was sitting in Laura’s lap, I turned to my mom, “When’s the rehearsal?”

As patient as ever, she answered, “They’re typically the night before the wedding.”

That’s when my dad tore away from his bantering with Clint, “So we’ll fly out to the venue a day or two before the rehearsal to get used to the time change. Then we’ll have the rehearsal the next day, then the wedding,” he explained.

Clint butted in, “and when’s the bachelor party?” He gave a mischievous smirk. *I’ll miss how light everything is here, how everyone can joke around so easily.*

Tony was quick to quip, “and what do you care, you’re not a groomsman.”

“Are you saying I’m not invited?” He asked in a mock shock, making Nathaniel laugh at his antics. *Am I invited? Aren’t bachelor parties supposed to be super crazy? I can’t blame anyone if they don’t want a minor there. It’s not like it’s important if I go or not, I’m lucky to be a groomsman at all.*

My dad shrugged, “I don’t even know who’s invited, Rhodey is organizing it all.”

To which Clint smiled even bigger, “so in other words, I’m definitely invited because Rhodey loves me.” Though Tony rolled his eyes at the man, he still had a smile on his face.

My mom turned to me, “Peter, we should go finish preparing everything to go,” she instructed me. *Probably her way of leaving the men to their joking around.* “Everything packed?” She asked. Once I nodded, we made our way upstairs. Since my dad did most of the work for me last night, I just put away my art stuff and made my bed. With a last check around the room, making sure I had everything packed, I brought my bags back downstairs.

I’m not sure when the plane came and was prepared, but as soon as my bag was downstairs, it was brought inside the aircraft. *Thank god I didn’t need to go back in that stupid thing more than necessary.*

*God, god I need to go back in the plane. God I can’t do this, I relapsed last time, how am I supposed to deal with it now? And this time if I need to, I can’t even scratch or anything because Dad will be paying extra close attention to me. And Natasha said she’d be here, but she’s not going to be, she’s staying and I have to go. So I can’t even go to her.*

As if he could read my thoughts, my dad came over to me, “You ready, kid?” *No never, I’m never ready I can’t be ready I’m not I can’t*, “I’m here for you, okay?”

I took a shaky breath, *god I need to calm down. I have my dad here with me, I’m not alone, I’m not alone. I’m not.*

I couldn’t manage to get out any words, but he didn’t seem to mind, wrapping his arm around me. After a goodbye nod from Clint, a “we’d love to have you again” from Laura, and several hugs from the kids, we had to face the plane.

Even coming up the plane steps my dad kept his hand on my back, leading me up, only to wrap it back around me as soon as in the plane. This time, he started by sitting next to me, *he’s keeping an eye on me . But can I really blame him?*

Though my ability to breathe vanished yet again, he was still here with me, here for me. As soon as he noticed my breathing begin to get irregular, he wrapped his arms around me fully, hugging me best he could. He held me the whole way up, until my ears popped and I could finally breathe again. Or at least, breathe better than before.

One of his hands rubbed my back, while the other carded his fingers through my hair. *How pathetic can I be to need my dad to hold me just to go on a plane ride?* Though as pathetic as I know I am, I didn’t have it in me to move out of the embrace.

This plane ride only seemed to take longer than the last one, to my dismay. But he didn’t let me go, he never let me go. Though the surge of emotions only seemed to bring back my exhaustion from the morning. As the heaviness of tiredness took hold of me, I could hear the man begin the hum. I could feel the vibrations from his voice in a soothing sort of way.

He breathed out, between his hums, “it’s okay if you wanna sleep, I’m here, I won’t let anything happen to you,” he assured me. As much as my mind fought to keep me awake, my body just kept getting heavier and heavier.

After much humming and him endlessly running his fingers through my hair, I finally was able to drift off.

I didn’t wake up until I felt myself being moved, “mm?” I mumbled, eyes still closed.

“Shh,” he hushed me, “kiddy, go back to sleep,” he whispered to me as I felt him pick me up. *How can he hold me, I can’t weigh that little?*

I didn’t bother opening my eyes, “m’kay,” I murmured, letting myself begin to drift. Though I didn’t quite fall asleep until after I felt him carrying me down the plane stairs and into the car.

I heard Happy’s voice, but didn’t have the energy to say anything, “kid asleep?” He whispered.

My dad shifted so that I was half in his lap, half on the seat of the car, “yeah, plane ride knocked him out,” there was such a deeply ingrained fondness in his voice, “I’m sure he’ll tell you all about learning to be the next Hawkeye tomorrow though,” I didn’t have to have my eyes open to know he was definitely smirking.

Once I knew we were landed and safe, on our way home, I finally got my mind to quiet enough to drift off. As sleep was finally taking over, I felt my dad kiss me on the head.

## Chapter End Notes

Honestly I’ve been scared to post for this series since the absolute mess of Mother’s Day, but I also felt bad for not posting. So I figured just a short chapter could be okay, one to make me less scared, and to not overwhelm myself because I have a pride month one shot series I’m working on and I’m trying not to write myself out. I have a basic idea for the next chapter so I should hopefully not take a month to write the next one, but I don’t make promises.

Y’all should know by now I don’t proof read. If there’s mistakes in this as I’m sure there are, I’m sorry.

Thank you for reading :)

## somewhere quiet

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

It felt like the second we got back home we were thrown back into the wedding whirlwind. I'm not even the one getting married and I can't wait for this all to be over, so we can all finally relax. Not that I'm not excited, I really am, but like I can't wait until I don't need to be constantly making art with such a huge enormous gigantic deadline coming up.

The first day was easier, even though I insisted that I can get back into the swing of things, my dad is just much more persistent and honestly I was just much too tired to keep arguing. We just lounged around watching movies, cuddled on the couch. Even Bucky joined us for a movie or two, weirdly enough he only wanted to watch the Disney ones. *Not that I'm complaining.*

I even got to ramble on and on to Happy about learning archery from The Hawkeye which was like so insanely cool. Instead of rolling his eyes and brushing me off with a groan like he used to, he actually listened attentively and even told me he was happy for me. *Pun intended.*

The second day went back to the craziness of wedding planning. *It's like we never left at all.* Part of me thinks it's better to be kept busy doing art, the more busy I am the less time I have to be anxious about every everything. But like... *yeah nope, it's good. It's all good.*

The third day, I thought would be the same as the day before, but while sketching out my next art piece my dad approached me.

With a knock on my door, he entered my bedroom, "Hey kid," he greeted me with a warm smile, "how's the drawing going?" He asked, sitting down on my bed next to me.

Scooching over my markers so he could sit more comfortably, I shrugged, "what do you think?" I turned my paper towards him so he could see my sketch. *God, I hope he likes it.*

He smiled again, but this time there was something else in it, *maybe he really does hate my drawing*, "it looks great Spider-baby," he paused for a few breaths before speaking again, "can I talk to you for a sec? Don't worry! It's nothing bad," he tried and failed to reassure me. *Is it about the name change again?*

I nodded, biting my lip while putting my art supplies down. He wrapped his arm around me, "I



promise it's nothing bad," *sad I don't believe in promises* , "I've just been thinking about this for awhile, but I didn't want to mention it the same night as the Potts thing, I didn't want to throw so much change to you at once." *Y'know, that did little to ease my anxiety.* But at least I still have his arm around me, helping to ground me, "I'm going to be frank with you, you need a real home."

My brows furrowed, while I turned to face him better I asked, "what do you mean? This is my home?" I didn't mean for the last part to come out as a question rather than a statement.

His smile lessened a bit, turning more sad, "being back here, in this environment really solidified it for me. You deserve a *real* home, not a compound. You deserve somewhere comfortable like Clint's farm." *Is he saying we're moving? Right before the wedding? I mean I know he's Tony Stark and can pay for anything to be done but isn't that so soon? So abrupt?* He continued before I could ask any of my endless inquiries, "we won't be leaving anytime soon, if we move at all. I've talked about it with Pepper and we both agree that somewhere more homey could really help you."

He gave me a few moments to absorb everything he was saying. As much as I overthink everything, not even I saw this coming. Eventually, I was able to pull my thoughts together enough to ask, "where would we go?"

He seemed to ease a bit, "well that's what I want to talk to you about. We have plenty of time, we definitely aren't doing anything before the wedding. Pepper and I have come up with a couple ideas."

I didn't mean to interrupt him, "would we go to Avengers tower?" *Avengers tower without the Avengers? Wait, we'll be leaving everyone behind won't we? I absolutely love my parents but like, sometimes it's nice to be able to hang out with Steve and talk with Bucky. And what about Happy? He has his own life, would he follow us wherever we go?*

He sighed, "come back," he whispered, pulling me from my stupid overthinking thoughts, "let's talk this through, yeah?" At my nod, he continued on, "I thought about the Tower too, but that's not what I was thinking. That's just trading one not home like place for another," he once again gave me a second to absorb before talking more, "we also thought about staying down at Malibu after the wedding, but I kind of announced my address some years ago so," he drew out the word, earning a smile from me.

He chuckled at himself, I grinned but did not say anything, *honestly I wasn't sure what to say* , "so we thought up two options. I even consulted Rhodey to get another opinion," he ran his fingers through his hair, "anyway, we thought either we could get an apartment back in the city, or get a nice little house somewhere more rural. 'Little' obviously being a relative term," he poked me a bit, causing me to yelp out in a laugh.

Though I could easily push him off of me, I let him continue to poke me, causing more and more laughter from me until I began to have trouble breathing. Only then did he let up, giving me a chance to catch my breath. “Any thoughts?” He asked, quieter this time. At my shrug, he went on, “well there are positives and negatives to both options. I always thought a lake house somewhere would be nice, it would be a more private and quiet life. It would be more like the Barton’s, away from the world.”

*That would be nice, I loved the farm, even if it wasn’t so quiet there with all the kids. It would be nice to really be able to get away, no pressure. But if we move somewhere, won’t I lose the option to become Spider-Man again? I already feel like I gave up on him, and that... that would be like the final decision. I’d really not be Spider-Man again.*

Though, I waited for him to describe the second option before I voiced his concern, “with the city, you would have the option to go back to Midtown, or join a different school. With either choice, online or homeschool is a totally okay possibility,” he assured me, “and of course Spider-Man would be a possibility in the ci-”

*Wow I’m rude as hell, why can’t I stop interrupting him?* “Wait what? I could be Spider-Man again?” I questioned.

He chuckled a bit, “Underoos, I’ve already said you could be Spider-Man again,” *well yeah, but I wasn’t sure if things changed or something.* “But that doesn’t mean you have to, and you don’t have to go to Midtown again either. I just want you to know you have options.” *Part of me is thankful for the freedom to choose, but like too many choices is overwhelming and there’s already so many overwhelming things happening and like-* “hey, hey, it’s okay.” *How in the hell can he see my panic when it’s only just begun?* “We don’t need to decide tonight. Or anytime soon, just something I want you to think about. And we can talk about it whenever you want, or you can talk to Pepper too.”

With a thank you, I leaned my head on his shoulder. All these new thoughts seemed to just drain all the energy out of me. Yet somehow, my dad did not seem to mind, just holding me close. *It’s definitely something we’ll need to talk about. Later. Yeah, later is good.*

## Chapter End Notes

Well I didn’t feel like working on my pride series but I still wanted to be productive and so I figured I might as well try to update this quicker than usual. And thank you

guys so so much for all the comments on the chapter 89, it really did help motivate me to not give up on this series.

And yep Peter is gonna keep making art, I had to make 63 paintings for my brothers wedding so imma make Peter have to do a crap ton of art too cuz ventingggg and I have no idea what I'm doing anymore with this story. So,, fun times. I have ideas for the sequel and the ending of this one but I don't know how to get there, like I don't wanna rush it but I don't wanna draw it out too long either. I just don't know what to do anymore. I'm still scared to end this story and lose everything that came with it. I've made my closest friends through this fic and I've found more support through here than I've ever had in my entire life and I'm scared for everything to end when I post the last chapter.

Thank you for reading :)

## an avenger

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Even when I insisted that I'm fine being home alone, my dad still persisted; he doesn't want me to be lonely. *Or maybe after the incident on the plane he's scared to leave me home alone. Can I really blame him though?* Though, to be fair he did give me an option on which 'totally not a babysitter cuz you're obviously not a baby' to have while he and my mom do whatever wedding stuff it is they have to do. But, there wasn't much of a choice when Happy went with my parents, Natasha is still at Clints, and Steve was out with Sam somewhere.

So that's how Bucky ended up being my 'definitely not a babysitter what are you talking about'. Sitting in the common room, he was content to just sit with me and read while I continued doing even more art for the wedding. *Because the art just never ends.* It was actually kind of nice, though, to just have someone to be around. No pressure to talk or anything else stressful if we don't want to, just to have a nice presence there.

*It's kind of strange to be around Bucky without Steve, it's only once in a blue moon I see them separate anyway. But it's kind of nice in a selfish way, to have Bucky all to myself.*

Finishing the art piece I was working on, I held it up to him, "Bucky, what do you think? Honestly?" *If my parents aren't here I still need someone to validate my art, I can't risk giving shitty art for a wedding that would be insane.*

He only took a second to analyze my drawing before giving me one of his small smiles, "it looks great." *How is he always able to get a grin out of me?* Before I could begin sketching my next art piece, he asked, "can I tell you something?"

*Well that's not eerie at all.* "Uh sure," I tried to not sound as nervous as I was feeling. Putting down my pencil, I told him, "go ahead."

He gave another faint smile, *why does he need to reassure me?* "It's nothing bad," *yeah people always say that before saying a bad thing, or at least an overwhelming thing like moving homes suddenly just to give an example,* "I just want to say that with Stark and Pepper getting married, if you ever feel left out or anything, I'm here for you too." *Wait what?* My surprise at his statement must of shown on my face because he continued, "I just know how easy it is to feel like the people you love are moving on without you, even if they actually aren't. So I'm just saying if you need anything, I'm here too."

I didn't respond right away, instead trying to work through everything packed into those few sentences. *He knows what it's like to see loved ones move forward? He must mean Steve, everyone knows he loves Steve. But they're literally dating, or maybe they're married? I dunno, I don't keep track of that kinda thing. But like, Steve hasn't moved on from him? Oh! Oh, I'm stupid. With the Avengers and Sam, he 'moved on' with new friends, new people to spend time with even if it's not romantically. Like how Tony is moving on with Pepper even if she's very obviously not his son, she's still another person to split his time and love with. So maybe he does understand...* "thank you, that really means a lot," and I could only hope I could get across all the gratitude I meant to.

"Of course," he said it so casually, as if I thanked him for something as little as making me a sandwich or something, "and just so you know, I know Steve feels the same way." *God, what did I do to deserve to have the Avengers care about me so much? I don't deserve it, I really don't. First Bucky is willing to spend so much time with me, and then Steve is willing to draw with me, Natasha opens up about her own struggles so I can know I'm not alone, Clint opened his house to me and treated me like his own kid. Like, this is actually insane. It's crazy, like I'm just some dumb kid, why would they all care so much? It doesn't make sense.*

When I felt him staring, I realized I didn't respond to him, getting trapped inside my own mind like always, "thank you, that means a lot to hear." *My mind is like the witch's house in Hansel and Gretel, it seems so innocent but as soon as you enter you get trapped. And then you get burned alive. And somehow that's supposed to be a children's story.* Because somehow I don't know what self control is, I asked, "did my da- did Tony tell you to tell me that?" My voice began to die out with each word, ending on a pathetic mumble.

He answered simply, "no, he didn't tell me anything except to hang out with you for the day." *Oh yes, 'hang out', the best way to say babysit without sounding so childish. Not that this isn't nice, it's just... I dunno, it's stupid, I'm stupid. Frick- I'm not supposed to be mean to myself, Dad doesn't like when I am. He says I need to practice being nice to myself even if I don't think I deserve it, and apparently stupid isn't nice to call myself.*

"Oh okay, thank you for answering," I replied without really thinking about it.

He gave me a look I couldn't quite make out, *and how do you expect me to not call myself stupid?*, "you don't need to thank me for that kind of thing." I began to say the word 'yes' but quickly bit my lip to cut myself off. *I shouldn't argue even if I think he's wrong. I should thank him, why wouldn't I?* Instead of arguing, I mumbled out a sorry. "You don't need to apologize either." *What am I supposed to even say if I can't apologize, that's like half my vocabulary? And how do I respond to that without apologizing for 'unnecessarily' apologizing?*

Instead, I just kept biting my lip so I didn't say anything else wrong. He didn't seem to mind though, content in the quiet while I finally picked up my pencil again and began to draw again. *I do have to admit, it's good to know even when it doesn't feel like I do, I may actually have more*

*people there. That thought still makes me want to ask a million more questions, mostly why why why, but it's still nice to think about.*

We stayed like that, in that comfortable silence while I started and finished a few more drawings, him reading away what I could have sworn was a book about disney through the years. But I wasn't about to ask.

*I would never tell my dad, but maybe a 'not babysitter' wasn't a terrible idea.*

## Chapter End Notes

Well June is over so that means my pride series is over, so I can focus more on this fic... and the four other WIP's I'm working on. It was really hard writing a fic every day for the pride series but I got over 60k words written in a month, not including chapters for this and other random one shots I wrote because I have no self control when it comes to writing, and the other WIP I started that I wrote like 15k words for. Anywayyy, Point is it really really helped me get back into the practice of writing (especially things that are longer than 1k words) and editing and coming up with ideas and so I'm going to try to be more disciplined when it comes to this story and to posting and planning the sequel. Though ending this story really scares me still, it's something I gotta do at one point or another and ending it sooner means more time to work on the sequel which I really am excited for. No promises but hopefully I'll start posting for this story more and then wrap it up at some point. And if all goes well I would start posting for the sequel really soon after that.

## a party

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

I'm not sure whose idea it was, but cramming me, my dad, Rhodey, Clint, Bucky, Steve, Happy, and Bruce all into one car was more chaotic than it probably seems. Yeah eight people should be able to fit fine, but this is also two super soldiers who take up more room than many, and of course Clint's huge head taking up most of the space. Rhodey wouldn't even tell us where he was driving, just insisting there's something there for everyone. No one told me that a bachelor party is like a half day affair, as we got in the car late afternoon and would supposedly be out the whole night.

*As much as Rhodey insists everyone will have fun, I can't help but feel like they'd have more fun without me. I'm the only minor, after all, I can't even drink. I can't do what they all can do...*

Even though my dad did assure me before we left that he knows Rhodey would make sure everything was 'Kid friendly' and yes the pun was intended, I could not keep my hands from trembling the slightest bit. Though, sitting cramped between Clint and Happy in a seat definitely not made for three people did help distract as Clint kept insisting that I was purposely elbowing him. Eventually Rhodey, the definite dad of the group ironically, grumbled, "if you don't like your seat why don't you go sit in back?"

Clint gave a look of such mock horror it even got me to crack a smile, to which he winked at me of course, "and get between the two *lovers* ? No thank you," he emphasized over dramatically, earning a well deserved kick to the seat from either Bucky or Steve, as it was unlikely Bruce gave the kick. "Hey! That's no fair, I can't kick you back!" Clint exclaimed, only to get another kick to his seat. "Why don't you kick Peter's seat, he started it," he accused, despite the fact that though I was uncomfortable pressed between him and Happy, I was in no way attacking him. That is until he said that.

And that is when my dad spoke up, from the safety of the passenger seat which everyone insisted he sat in, since it's a party to celebrate him and he shouldn't be squished in. *I swear there's plenty of bigger cars, Rhodey must have picked this one just to mess with us.* "Aw, the baby can't handle the Spider-Baby," to which both Clint and I gave a defiant 'hey!' With one mischievous look from the archer next to me, I knew what he was thinking. Before anyone could stop us, we both gave a swift kick each to the back of Tony's seat, to which he called out, "hey!"

Though before any more retaliations could be made, Rhodey pulled into a parking lot of what appeared to be an arcade? "Oh honeybear, you didn't..." if I didn't have super hearing I wouldn't have heard my dad.

With a comforting hand on his shoulder, Rhodey gave him a huge grin, “how could I end tradition?”

With that totally not confusing statement, we all practically fell out of the car and entered the building. My dad casually wrapped his arm around my shoulders, going into an explanation before I could even ask, “in college Rhodey would always drag me here whenever he thought I needed to destress, and to keep me from destressing in more unhealthy ways.” I didn’t dare ask what he meant by ‘unhealthy ways.’ It’s not like it’s not common knowledge that he struggled with alcohol for so many years. It’s just not something I’ve heard *him* actually talk about much... Looking around, a grin back on his face, he murmured, “still looks the same. C’mon dumpster diver, let’s find a game,” he smirked at me.

Looking around, Bruce with all the patience in the world was trying to show Steve and Bucky how to play Pac Man, and Clint apparently already challenged Rhodey to some game I shockingly didn’t recognize, with Happy observing. Walking up to a Galaga machine, my dad instantly took control as if he plays these kinda games all the time. With a smug smirk he showed me the high scores and at the top with a score of 17,684,050, which I didn’t even know was possible was the name AHS. Anthony Howard Stark. Gaping at him I still asked, “that’s *your* score?”

With a smirk so full of pride it could have put anyone to shame, he replied “yep,” of course popping the ‘p’. “Care to try to beat it?” He challenged me.

Despite knowing there’s no way in hell even I could beat such an insane score, I still smirked back at my dad, “you say that as if it’s hard.” With that I started playing and if I do say so myself, I wasn’t *awful* but no where close to the level college age Tony Stark was. That doesn’t mean though we didn’t have fun, there were more than a few laughs along the way.

Though nothing could compare to Clint. He challenged every single person in the wedding party to a different game, eventually getting to me with the challenge of Dance Dance Revolution. After the bitter defeats of everyone else, he more than a little cockily faced me off, only for him to be demanding a rematch when he lost far too quickly for his liking. After the defeat he was only mildly less overconfident, still insisting he could easily beat my dad’s Galaga score despite never actually playing it to prove himself.

Though, even after a few hours of games and laughing, the night was apparently still not over because Rhodey once again packed us all in the car, much to Clint's dismay. This ride was only slightly less eventful, though it still seemed to last an eternity even with my hands not trembling the entire way. Eventually, we ended up at a pier? *What?*

It was Steve who voiced my question, “since when do you have a boat, Rhodes?”



My dad's best friend let out a laugh, "it's not my boat, though I did rent it out for us for the night. It's a dinner cruise," he explained while leading us up to said boat. *A dinner cruise? Aren't those just things in the movies for fancy people? Well I guess we are fancy people, or at least my dad is. And I am by association? I dunno.*

*I haven't been on a boat since... god I can't go back on there. Yeah this isn't a ferry but like, I can't. I'll ruin it somehow. Yeah there's no bad guys this time, probably, so the boat should stay intact but like...they can sink, and sinking means drowning and I can't drown I can't, there's no Iron Man suit this time. He can't save me, there's other nonenhanced people here that would have to be saved before me. But how likely is it that we would sink? It's a dinner cruise, it can't go out that far right?*

As if he sensed my anxiety spiking, my dad put his arm around me tightly. Not an uncomfortable tightness though, more like assurance that he's here, he'll protect me. Entering the boat, after taking a second to get my bearings back, a man who worked on the boat led us over to a nicely set table right next to a large window showing the open water before us. My dad sat me down right next to him, so that I was between the window and him, *maybe it'll help to be able to see out and know exactly where we are.* The waiter came and placed a few bottles of champagne on the table, to which all the men except my dad and I poured themselves a glass.

*If the stories are right, he wasted away, literally, many occasions and parties when he was younger so I guess it makes sense he wouldn't even want to tempt himself with one glass.*

Turning to me, he whispered so only I could hear, "Petey," he took a breath, as if still trying to decide whether to say whatever he wanted to say or not, "if you want to try *one* glass of champagne, you can," to my eyes practically bugging out, he continued on to explain, "I mean, you're going to grow up and could be in situations in which you might be pressured to drink," *well that's not pleasant to think about.* "And I would much rather you do your experimenting in a safe and controlled environment than off somewhere with people who might not be giving a safe example." *Wait, I can drink? Underage? I'm not even an adult yet.*

My brows furrowed, "you want me to drink?"

He shook his head, "no, I don't *want* you to drink, but I want you to be safe and responsible. So if you experiment in a safe place you'll have a better idea for when I'm not around to monitor you." *That makes sense I guess, but like do I really need to experiment? I mean, I have wondered what alcohol would taste like but I don't really need to know.*

I spoke before my thoughts could get too complicated and confuse me, "I don't think I want to

try...”

He gave me a pat on the shoulder, “and that’s completely okay, that’s nothing to be ashamed of. If you ever do wanna try though, please come to me,” though his voice was even, his eyes looked practically begging. To my nod of assurance, he gave me one of those proud smiles I love. It wasn’t long until a buffet of food was ready and we all went to grab our dinner.

*If it’s a self serving buffet, then I can give myself as little food as I want. No one can stop me, I won’t be wasting any. I can’t keep wasting food. But if I sit next to my dad then he’ll see how much I’m eating, or rather how little I’m eating, and that’ll only make him worry. This is his Bachelor Party, he shouldn’t be worrying about me of all people. Even if I got a whole plate full, which still feels like far too much, that’s not enough for my metabolism. There’s no winning, is there?*

I ended up with one plate full, too much for me, and still too little for my dad. But it’s something I guess. Though, as much as I hate to admit it, the food did taste much better than I expected. Eating fancy food on a dinner cruise is definitely much more high class than I ever thought I’d be. Before I knew it there was a dessert buffet, and then a DJ appeared out of who knows where. Of course it was Clint who insisted everyone should go on the dance floor, even going so far as to literally pull me over to dance with him. Eventually, he was able to convince everyone, even Bruce, to come on the dance floor, though there were extremely varied levels of commitment to the dancing.

Clint ended up showing me some strange movements I swear looked like gang signs, while Rhodey got my dad to do some dance from their college days. Steve and Bucky stayed off to the side to do their own thing, mostly slow dancing despite the high energy music playing, and Bruce opted to record it all on his phone which I’m sure will turn into blackmail for at least one person later on. It definitely was not the kind of party I had expected, not that I really had expectations since all I knew about bachelor parties were from movies, but I have to admit it was nice. My dad was right yet again, not that I can tell him that though. Don’t need him thinking he’s right about *everything*, even if he may actually be.

## Chapter End Notes

Thank you LitteMissAgrafina for the arcade idea ;)

Well y’all, who’s surprised I once again went a whole month without writing? I’m not. Last month went to crap real quick after I wrote chapter 91 and I just did not have it in me mentally to do any writing at all and I barely did anything at all the entire month I was so focused on trying to just stay alive and as okay as I could be. This month has definitely started off a lot better and I have finally decided to choose exactly how to end this fic. I had a vague idea before but now I went through all of my notes I’ve kept for this thing and organized it all and divided the ideas into chapters. And I’ve figured

enough content to end up with 100 chapters total, and I'm going to stick with that and not add any more random chapters when I'm uninspired like I've done before. I'm still very scared to end this fic, but I know it'll be mentally better for me sooner than later because it gives me more time to work on the sequel. Which I am definitely absolutely doing I have a LOT of ideas for it and I'm very excited :)

Well, I'll be trying to write but y'know I say that every time and then my mental health dies, so I'll finish this fic at my own pace. Now at least it is all planned out on a very basic level, so I'm not starting with nothing which helps.

Thank you so much for the patience.

## to be heard

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

I should have seen it coming, given that my mom is Pepper Potts of all people, she is not one for loose ends. She always gets the job done, no matter what. It was while I was drawing, because that's all I ever do at this point, that she approached me. "Hey, Pete. Can I talk to you about the wedding?"

*She probably wants me to make more drawings. Which is fine, I'm almost done anyway. Though, if she wants too many done I won't be able to finish before we head out to Malibu. How many more can she even need?* I nodded, "yeah, of course," I gave a last stroke of the marker before capping it and meeting her soft gaze. *She always appears so warm and soft when she looks at me.*

She gave me one of *those* smiles, "I just wanted to check in to see how you're feeling with everything going on and with the wedding." *Wait what?* "I know this is a stressful time and I want to make sure that you're heard."

Though I could think of three thousand reasons why this is stressful for me, I still asked, "what do you mean?"

She gave a small sigh, "you don't have to pretend you're not stressed. Just because you're not the one getting married doesn't mean it's a lot for you, emotionally and with tasks to do." *How could she see through me so easily? It makes sense that my dad would be able to, he's seen me at my literal worst, repeatedly, and he's been here for me for years. But she hasn't known me nearly as long, she sees through me so easy it's like I'm glass. Glass would be pretty fitting actually.*

"I dunno," I mumbled, despite the fact we both knew she was right.

She reached a hand out and ran it through my curls just like dad does. "How about this, I say what's on my mind and then you can give your thoughts on it if you so wish, then you don't have to be so vulnerable?" *She really is more considerate than anyone gives her credit for.* To my nod of approval, she began opening up, "I've been worried about you and how you've been coping with everything with the wedding and all the changes coming with it," she started off plainly. I had to bite my lip to keep from protesting that there's nothing to worry about.

Though she seemed to know somehow that I wanted to speak, she continued on when I did not form the words, "I've been worried that you would think I'm taking over, because I'm marrying

Tony and with that comes changes. And I understand how so many changes can be really overwhelming.” *How does she open up so easily? Her voice is so even and calm, she’s not even tearing up or anything.* “I know you’ve called me Mom before and that makes me so incredibly happy,” she smiled so big, “and I really am excited that we will be an *official* family. I do want to ask though, how you feel about becoming a Potts rather than a Stark. I know you’ve been planning for so long on being a Stark and the rug was ripped out from under you with no warning.”

This time, she waited for me to take in her words and actually come up with a response. “I want to be a Potts,” I’m not sure if I was trying to convince her or me more. “I understand why my dad doesn’t want to be a Stark anymore, and it’s just a name what matters is we will be a family.” *I don’t even know where those thoughts came from but I’m sticking with them.*

She beamed even brighter than the Sun, “we are a family. It will just be more in a legal way now,” and I reflected a smile back at her. “And Peter, I want to make it completely clear to you that you can *always* come to me. I understand that you would be more comfortable to go to Tony, just know I’m another option for you too, okay?”

I didn’t mean to sound so choked up, “thank you.” If I said another word I would have shed a tear or two.

That is when she decided to shift focus, “of course, honey. But there are a couple other things I wanted to talk over with you. One is about moving, I know Tony talked to you a bit about it before but I wanted to make sure it wasn’t something you’re worried about now.” *How exactly am I not supposed to worry? This is my safe place, my home, it’s been my refuge from May, and he wants to leave it behind.* “That’s for down the road, for after the wedding and the honeymoon. Oh!” She gasped out, as if suddenly remembering something she had forgotten long ago.

*And once again, the idea of moving is shoved down, labeled for later. As if that makes it any less anxiety inducing.* She kept talking, “speaking of the honeymoon, I know that’s not something I don’t think Tony talked to you much about, if at all, but it’s something him and I have been talking about extensively.” *Well yeah, it’s a huge vacation to plan, right? I don’t know that much about how that kinda stuff works, it’s probably just a lovey dovey vacation.* “Most of that talk was about the length of the honeymoon, and as of now we are thinking around ten days.”

*Ten days? Ten days without my parents? I’ve barely been away from my dad for a single day since he took me in, how am I supposed to last ten days?*

*No, no that’s selfish. This is their honeymoon, they deserve time free of worry, free of me. They shouldn’t have to worry about me or superhero business or Stark Industries, they should be able to enjoy time just the two of them. They should be able to make the most of it.*

She explained, “we were thinking ten days because we want to have a nice vacation but neither of us want to leave you for so long. There will be wiggle room though for us to shorten or lengthen the trip depending on how it goes for us and for you.” *Is it bad that my first thought was about how much I absolutely do not want them to lengthen the trip? That’s so selfish though. They deserve to be able to leave for a month with no worries at all. Lengthening the trip would be good for them.*

“Now, you won’t be alone for however long the honeymoon is, Tony and I already talked with Bucky, Steve, and Happy.” *Three babysitters?* “Bucky and Steve agreed to stay with you for the entirety of the honeymoon and if for some reason they are both out, Happy agreed to take over then.” *Yep, three babysitters. Though, they are all great guys and it’s nice to hang out with them. And Bucky did say he’ll be here for me, he is keeping to his word.*

But my mom wasn’t done yet, “I know you and Tony have hardly been apart at all and so if for whatever reason you need something or something goes wrong, *please* call. And before you say or think that you don’t want to be a bother, I know for a fact it would ease Tony’s mind to know you were comfortable enough to reach out.” *I don’t want my dad to worry...*

“Okay,” I agreed. *I know I can’t actually call them, no matter what she says I can’t risk bothering them. But I don’t want my dad to worry, he deserves to be worry free.*

She gave me another smile, “thank you,” she said as if I actually did anything. She’s the one doing all the work, “I love you.”

I grinned back at her, “I love you too.”

## Chapter End Notes

Well these last couple days have absolutely sucked and I really shoulda seen it coming. The biggest thing that went wrong I can’t fix I just gotta wait out and hope it gets better eventually which sucks. But then on top of that because of course life loves to screw with me I got an email from school that absolutely messes up this school year as if I needed a reason to hate school more. I wanted a distraction from the big thing that went wrong but this isn’t what I meant.

Whatever personal issues I’m having though I still gotta finish this fic so I’ll keep trying to write through it. I was able to post another one shot for this series for Peter Parker’s birthday which was genuinely fun to write, so that was nice. I more thoroughly planned the rest of this fic and the beginning of the sequel so I have no excuse not to write. I want to try to get as much done as I can before I start school which is really really soon.

Thank you my darling LittleMissAgrafina for the idea of Pepper talking to Peter about everything.

## to distract

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The amount of relief that flooded through me when I finally finally *oh my god finally* finished making art for the wedding. Every sign and card and drawing and everything in between was finally finished and done with and oh my god I never thought it would end. Though, as much work as it was that means there's no more distraction from the wedding and from the plane ride *oh god the plane ride*.

Part of me had hoped I forgot an art piece to do because then it gives me something to do on the plane ride today, but of course I didn't because someone as anxious as me does not check at least ninety four times to make sure everything that I was supposed to do is done. Of course my dad will be on the plane with me, as will my mom, and Happy, and Bucky, Steve, Bruce, Rhodey, Wanda, Clint, Natasha, and literally anyone else who wanted to come because why not? *That's totally not overwhelming at all*.

But ironically, if Clint's family had come to the compound instead of being flown to Malibu straight from their farm maybe that would have helped, what's a better distraction from impending fear and doom than a bunch of cute kids? Of course that's not what happened though, because why would anything be that simple. *Why couldn't they come with us, Lila is the flower girl after all and Cooper and Nathaniel are the ring bearers*. No, I need to try not to fall apart in front of almost the entire wedding party. Only some women named Hope and Maria are missing I think? But they should be at Malibu by the time of rehearsal, at least that's what my mom said.

Getting ready to board the plane, my dad kept his arm wrapped around me tightly. "I'll be with you the whole time," he whispered, and I did not have to ask to know why he was being so protective. *It's not like I want a repeat of last time either*.

Boarding the private plane, I sat in the back with both of my parents while the rest of the wedding party scattered throughout the vehicle. *The plane didn't crash last time, what are the odds it crashes this time? It's unlikely, and besides there's almost all the Avengers here. The Avengers wouldn't let anything happen to us, especially with civilians here. We'll be fine. We'll be okay. It'll be alright. Even if it's not alright, it won't be just up to me. Iron Man always saves the day, and of the superheroes here half of them can fly away*.

"We're safe, Roo," my dad whispered endless assurances to me, "I'm right here. Nothing bad will happen." *How does he get his voice so soothing?* "We'll be in Malibu in just less than five and a half hours, that's less than a school day." Though it was kind of hard to believe in how confident he was in his own words as he was holding both my hands, physically keeping me from hurting myself. *Trapping me. Restraining me*.



*No, he's not trying to trap me. He wants to protect me from myself. He doesn't trust me, I can't blame him. I've hurt me again and again in many ways, how can I expect him to trust me. And I can rip my hands from his grip any time I want.*

"I'm right here. I won't let anything happen to you."

*But then he can just get Bucky or Steve to hold me down and that's trapping that doesn't sound safe. Maybe that's why we all took one flight, so there's several superheroes to keep me in check. To make sure I don't hurt myself or anyone else.*

"You're safe. We're all safe. It's a short flight, nothings going to happen."

*No, no he wouldn't do that. He wouldn't hurt me. He's not like May, none of them are. It's just stupid thoughts, just bad thoughts cuz of a dumb trigger. I just can't think clearly, I can't see clearly. It's all upside down and foggy and distorted and I thought I could see better than before but maybe I'll always see wrong.*

*Do I even make sense?*

I tried to distract myself from my muddled thoughts by watching The Avengers play a much too competitive game of Apples To Apples that undoubtedly Clint brought along. There were more than a couple cards thrown across the plane. *They really do look like a big family.*

When I finally did not look on the verge of a mental breakdown, or at least less likely to break down, my dad decided that was the time to give me news. "Hey kiddo," he brought my attention away from Clint and Natasha arguing over who should have one the green card that round. "There's something I forgot to tell you, at the wedding there will be one other teenager." *He knows another teenager?* His name is Harley Keener, I'm sure you'll love him, he's only a year older than you and I've known him for several years. He helped me out during the Mandarin scare." *There's a teenager he's known longer than me and he never mentioned?*

"Anyway, you don't have to hang out with him, you can be around anyone you feel most comfortable with, even me. I'm just letting you know there's another kid your age that's gonna be there," he said it so casually as if it doesn't bring up a million more questions.

My brows furrowed and I couldn't help but ask, "why haven't you mentioned him before?" *He*

*must be important if he's invited to the wedding of all things.*

He shrugged, "time flies. Me and him have talked a few times but I haven't done too good of a job keeping in touch, you know how I can get." *God do I know, I used to spam Happy my play by play of the day just to get a change of getting Mr. Stark's attention.* "There's that smile I love," he poked at me, finally releasing one of my hands, successfully making me grin more.

The rest of the ride was more calm, well at least for me and my parents. For everyone playing the card game it was anything but peaceful. The only snag in the road left was the landing but it wasn't quite as bad as when we flew to Clint's farm. *Now just a few days to get used to Malibu. Just a few days before my parents are married, god it's so close.*

## Chapter End Notes

Welp I know y'all keep saying I should focus on my mental health and take a break from writing when I need it but I'm running out of time. I don't have enough time to keep taking breaks, I'm TrYiNg to finish writing my first drafts of the rest of the fic in the next few days which is a lot and stressful but I feel like I need to. I have the next two chapters already written so I'll post them soon. Thank you for reading :)

## to know what to say

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

I never would have thought that the rehearsal of all things would be so stressful. Apparently the order that you stand in matters? It took a ridiculous amount of switching people around for my mom to be satisfied with the order of the groomsmen and bridesmaids on either side of the... well it's not a church. Turns out the wedding ceremony is on the actual beach, which should be problematic but somehow it already looks amazing and it's not even the wedding day yet. Well okay the wedding is tomorrow but I thought that all the decorations would be put up tomorrow since the ceremony is outdoors. How often does it even rain here?

*But what do I know anyway?*

Eventually my mom decided the order of the wedding party would be Rhodey standing closest to my dad, which makes sense since he's the most important groomsman. And then Natasha is closest to my mom on the other side, being the maid of honor. After Rhodey is Happy as he is best friend number two. After Natasha is Maria who I somehow forgot that she works for Nick Fury which is like super extremely badass.

And then it's me, I'm third most important? *Even though I know I'm their son it's still quite an honor to be third important y'know, like wow.* It took quite a lot of switching around but my mom eventually decided that Wanda would stand third on her side. After me is Bruce, the only groomsman left. Then Hope is the last bridesmaid and even though I haven't officially met her yet, she looks like she's got a kind face, yeah?

Turns out that the person who is in the same number place on their side is who you are paired with to walk down the aisle with, so I get to walk down with Wanda. *That must be why she was put third, because I can't walk with Natasha and the only other one there that I've met before is Wanda. They really are looking out for me.*

It was only after a warning of, "be careful not to lock your knees during the wedding so you don't pass out," which totally was not terrifying at all, that I found out the purpose of the ushers. *Because of course I need yet another thing to worry about tomorrow.* Apparently Bucky, Steve, and Clint are supposed to help people to their seats, because even in a 'relatively small' wedding people need help to their seats.

The best part by far though was to watch the Barton kids practice their wedding duties. Lila was only a tiny little bit *devastated* to find out that even though she's the flower girl, there's no flowers today only tomorrow. Cooper did an impressively well job helping Nathaniel down the aisle with

their ‘rings’. Am I the only one who wasn’t aware that the ring bearers don’t have the real rings but are only there for show? Turns out Rhodey is holding the actual rings, much to Happy’s dismay.

Happy keeps insisting, “I held that thing for eight years, why can’t I get one more day?” But I’m not sure what he’s talking about.

*Why is everything so complicated? I knew weddings were crazy to plan but god damn I had no idea, this is actually insanity. There’s three thousand little details I never would have thought of and wow I’ve never felt so utterly unprepared to be married and I’m not even planning on doing that for many years.*

After walking down the sandy aisle again and again and again, totally not awkwardly looping my arm with Wanda’s I only tripped over my own feet twice. I’m not convinced Wanda didn’t use a teeny bit of magic to keep me from tripping again. For a superhero, *ex superhero?*, you would think I would be lighter on my feet.

Freaky Friday prepared me well because I did know that there was a rehearsal dinner after the actual rehearsal. *Though somewhere in the depths of my mind I ever so vaguely remembered the idea of a speech. But in Freaky Friday that was about switching places, we don’t have to worry about that here. Which is kind of surprising given how unusual our family is.*

Dinner was at a nearby hotel and it was much fancier than I was expecting, but I really should not have been so shocked this is a billionaires wedding. Thankfully I was able to sit next to my dad which saved me from the awkwardness of not eating too much around people I don’t know well. But he wouldn’t be my dad if he didn’t make sure I didn’t at least eat enough to keep from passing out or getting too sick.

By the time everyone was finishing up their meal, Rhodey came over to my dad, “ready for me to begin?” And upon gaining approval, he raised his voice, “everybody, can I have your attention?” Only once the crowd quieted down did he continue, “to finish off today we will have an open mic for anyone to give a speech or tell a story of the happy couple. It can be funny or serious,” he explained and I felt my chest instantly tighten.

*Aren’t I supposed to give a speech? I’m their kid and I didn’t prepare anything. Won’t that reflect bad on me? Yeah most of them know to at least some extent that I have mental and anxiety issues and but that doesn’t mean I shouldn’t say anything. God, what am I supposed to say? How am I supposed to put into words how much they mean to me?*

I wish I could say I was paying more attention to whatever story Rhodey was saying because

everyone was laughing and seeming to have a swell time and here I am panicking.

*How can I not panic though because I need to say something? I can't just sit here and not let them know how they mean absolutely everything to me.*

Before I could even begin to collect myself enough to actually think of what to say, Natasha was up and saying her own speech with the poise of a performer. I wish I could say that that didn't totally make my heart beat out of my chest.

Hearing everyone laugh even during an assassins stories finally made something click in my head! Maybe I don't have to open myself up in front of all these people, maybe I can just tell a funny story, something no one else would tell. There haven't exactly been a lotta funny times these last several months though... but before that? Well...

*Oh! Oh my god! The proposal story! No one ever gets to hear my perspective of that mess. That's something literally no one can tell except me.*

Finally having a plan I mentally prepared myself to stand up in front of all these people, *god so many people*. When Natasha was done with whatever story she was telling, something that had to do with the alias Natalie or whatever, I stood up. With one look at my parents smiling face, I tried to force my too quick breathing to even out.

*And looking at them, I couldn't help but just be filled with so much love. Telling a funny story just wouldn't fit. Not right now. They need to hear how much I love them.*

"Hi everyone," I squeaked out, voice cracking. And of course it was Clint who called out 'hey' back, which did actually make me crack a small smile. *Thank you Clint*. "Well I had a plan for what to say, but that went out the window," everyone laughed at that. But not *at* me, more with me. "I just- there's so much to say and I'm not so good at talking. As you can tell," everyone laughed again and I got myself to smile somehow. "I owe everything to these two. They're my parents, and I never thought I'd be able to say that. I never even thought I'd have anyone who would love me, let alone want me as their own," I tried to ignore the tears leaking out of my eyes.

*Don't focus on the tears, don't focus on the tears, don't focus on it, don't do it. Don't, dont, don't-*

I continued my 'speech', "they have shown me more love than anyone in my entire life. They have shown me what family looks like, and what care and compassion really means. I wouldn't be here

without them,” my voice cracked again and I barely choked out my last words, “I love you, mom and dad.” Even though neither Rhodey or Natasha did, I moved towards my dad and he immediately got the memo and pulled me into a tight hug.

He didn’t even seem to mind my tears soaking into his shirt. “I’m so proud of you, Roo,” he whispered, “I love you.” *I know he’d deny it if I said there were tears in his eyes.*

I cried through my smile, only pulling back so I could hug my mom too. “Oh honey,” she smiled at me, tears dripping down her face, “I love you so much.”

I wish I could say I paid attention to the rest of the speeches, in which literally everyone here said at least one thing. Instead, I stayed sitting much closer to my dad, his arm wrapped right around me. Though I did have to hide my face when Rhodey said he recorded my whole speech and would send it to my dad.

## Chapter End Notes

Well guys I finished writing the rough drafts for the rest of this fic. But since I’m starting school tomorrow (which SUCKS) I dunno when I’ll have the chapters out. They need a lotta editing and I do think I should write at least one chapter for the sequel before I post the last chapter of this one. I’m still scared to end this fic so trying to end it right when I start school probably isn’t good cuz school is extremely incredibly anxiety inducing. But I’ll still try to have it done before too long. And if you are interested, I do have an idea for what the proposal would be and I could maybe write a one shot for it. Lemme know if that’s something’s y’all would want to read.

## for everything to be official

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Is there anything about the wedding that isn't completely insanely stressful? I thought the morning of the wedding was just stuffing myself in my way too expensive suit and waiting to walk down the aisle with Wanda *but god was I wrong*. All the men got one part of my dad's house, while the women got the other part, cuz we all can't see each other apparently. *This is all much too complicated.*

*How do they all just change their clothes with so much ease? They're superheroes too, how do they not have scars to hide? Yeah they most likely have different scars than I do, but like... they're all so unashamed. I don't get it.*

"Hey Petey," my dad approached me, "you okay? You haven't started changing yet," he said it low enough that the men wouldn't hear. *This is his wedding day, I can't worry him over something so stupid. It's not like any of them are making me take my clothes off, I just have to change into my suit. This isn't supposed to be trapping.*

I nodded, "yeah I'm fine," though I kept my eyes on the suit in my hands. Because apparently I am just that bad at hiding what I'm thinking.

He studied me for only a second before a realization crossed his face, "oh, oh kid why didn't you say something earlier?" He asked, sounding so let down... *I made him sad on his wedding, only I can be that selfish...* "C'mon kid, I'll find you a private bathroom you can change in, then no one can see you," he said it so matter of factly and yet with so much understanding just... wow. *How does he stay so compassionate even when I mess up? He doesn't even seem like I've screwed up, he's just willing to help no matter what. I don't understand it, but maybe that's okay.*

Leading me to a restroom as promised, he stopped me before I could enter, "I love you so much, kid," and for a moment I got to soak in the comfort. Just me and him. But of course the moment had to end, "come find me when you're changed, okay?" He told me, and with that he headed off to finish his own preparations.

Locking myself in the bathroom I forced my breaths deeper, *in and out, in and out, in and out...*

Peeling away my clothes, I changed into the suit, being careful to not look at the blemishes littering my body. Though this suit is undoubtedly the most comfortable and well fitting one I've ever

worn, my chest still felt tighter after putting it on. *Or maybe that's just a me thing.* After putting on everything but the tie, because of course I don't know how to tie my own tie, I exited the bathroom and ventured to find my dad.

*I used to think May would possibly teach me how to tie a tie.*

Walking in, I found all the men playing Apples to Apples yet again. Should I even be surprised? It was kind of surreal seeing a bunch of superheroes dressed so sharply playing such a domestic game. Though, they were having only a *small* bit of trouble staying clean with Nathaniel and Cooper playing off in the corner.

"Hey kiddo!" My dad greeted me, only to chuckle upon seeing my undone tie, "need some help?" To my only slightly timid nod, he abandoned the game and came over to help me, *that's quite fitting*. Immediately he began to expertly fix my accessory, mumbling explanations of what he was doing while doing the motions until it looked perfect.

With that done, my dad turned to the rest of his side of the wedding party, "now that you're all here, I have some groomsmen gifts," he announced casually. *A gift for being a groomsman? That's a thing?*

"Hey!" Clint called out, "what about us?" He gestured to him and the other two ushers, but also to the two ring bearers who were suddenly very interesting in what the adults were doing upon hearing the word 'gift'.

My dad waved his hand flippantly, "I have something for all of you, take a chill pill," and with that he pulled gifts out of seemingly thin air. Going around the room he handed various gift bags to each man in the room, giving me mine last. Opening my own present it revealed pens engraved with the name **Peter Potts**. I'm not ashamed to say I teared up.

*I'm gonna be a Potts. I'll finally be really leaving behind Parker and everything bad and traumatic with it. This is like the official fresh start. A complete redo at life.*

*And I do get to keep my initials which is a plus. God, I can't believe I actually get a fresh start.*

Looking around the room it seemed everyone received different gifts, because of course my dad is just that thoughtful. Everything from an excessively large pocket knife to a limited edition board game I know Ned would love. *I don't even remember the last time I've thought about Ned...* I



shouldn't even be surprised that my dad would know the perfect thing for everyone. Turning to the man in question, I lunged into his arms, "thank you Iron Dad."

And yet, even after all that excitement we still were not done. *I swear this day has already been going for forever.* Because after present time was photo time. Apparently you take wedding photos before *and* after the ceremony, doing just groomsmen photos before and whole party ones after. *Am I the only one who thinks that's excessive?*

Of course we have to be on the beach which means heat which means sweaty. And such a big day means anxiety which means sweaty. So that's double the sweaty. *I swear you'll be able to scroll through the photos and see the progression of me getting more and more drenched with my own sweat.*

What I didn't expect though, was the amount of fun pictures there were. There were plenty of silly faces pictures and fun poses. Even one of Steve holding my dad bridal style that I'm sure if the internet got a look at that they'd have a field day making fanart and fanfics of them. But I have to say, my favorites were the ones of just my dad and I. Now those are ones I'll treasure. *When I thought of wedding photos I thought of classy and boring looking ones, not anything so fun. It definitely helped spice up the day.*

By the time the photo session was over we still had time to spare, which of course meant more Apples to Apples and I *finally* was able to participate. *Now we just have to wait for the women to be ready. Just an hour or so until the ceremony, less than two hours until I have two parents. Officially.*

## Chapter End Notes

Well Monday was the worst first day of school I've ever had, so that's great. Fitting if I do say myself. But at least the last two days weren't as bad, I didn't cry as much. So yay improvement. Since sleeping is a no go I decided to work on this fic. I'm gonna try to finish editing the rest of the chapters soon (Me? Editing?? I know, crazy right) so that I can start writing the sequel. I think ending this fic will be less scary if I actually start to get into the sequel more so that's genuinely good. Thank you for reading :)

## Mr. and Mrs.

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

When it was finally time for the ceremony to begin, someone I didn't know was corralling all the groomsmen and bridesmaids into a tent near where the actual ceremony was so that we could all make a cool entrance like you would in a church. Apparently my mom was in a separate tent so that no one would see her before her big entrance. *Why are weddings so complicated? But I guess I really can't deny how excited I am to see her, especially after all the work we put into it.* At least that's what I heard, but I was more focused on my dad who was waiting with us. He looked, well not quite nervous, but with heavy anticipation. I've never seen him like this before.

He couldn't stop pacing and he seemed to be having to remind and reread himself again and again to not run his hand over his face or through his hair so he wouldn't mess up the careful work he put into how he looks. He really does look like a real groom.

Once Bucky, Steve, and Clint were finished ushering everyone to their seats, *it's not a huge wedding how can you not find your seats?*, my dad was sent out. He gave me one last reassuring shoulder squeeze before walking down the aisle with all the confidence in the multiverse. *I have no idea how he does it. Both how he can be so confident but also how he can put a million emotions in one single touch.* I wish I could have seen him go down but the tent flaps closed after he exited as to hide us from the view of the audience to not ruin the surprise I guess? *I can always watch the wedding video later.* I really don't understand weddings, we're just in suits and dresses. It's nothing that special, it's my mom who is special.

Once I assume my dad was in his place, the first pair of bridesmaid and groomsmen were sent out. Apparently you send them out in reverse order of importance I guess? So that meant Bruce and Hope walked down the aisle first and *god damn it wasn't I supposed to officially meet Hope and Maria before today? I guess it slipped everyone's minds.*

*God I'm going to slip and fall aren't I? I'm next, god I'm next. Since I stand third that means I'm next to go out, oh god what if I trip again? Can I count on Wanda's magic to save me? How am I supposed to walk down the aisle with as much poise and confidence as my dad? He did it so easily, or at least it seemed like it when he gave that huge beaming smile when he left the tent.*

Wanda looped her arm through mine, and god I look so underdressed compared to her. *Well, compared to all the women.* Each bridesmaid wore a deep blue dress, the same color as my special marker. Though each woman had a different style of dress, the only thing making them match was the color, and yet they still all looked absolutely stunning. *Don't ask me why that is.* Only then did I understand why all the men wore blue ties, it matched the bridesmaids dresses.

Wanda gave me a reassuring smile before taking lead, Bucky and Steve held the tent flaps open and with that we began our walk down the aisle. *Don't trip, don't trip, don't trip, don't trip, don't trip.* I did not let myself look around to see who was attending, instead keeping my eyes on my dad upfront as much as I was tempted to stare down at my feet. *Don't trip, don't trip, don't trip, don't trip.*

Though in my peripheral vision I did notice the magnificent decorations and god my mom really did outdo herself. If you didn't have the ocean waves crashing in the background and soft sand under your feet it really would have looked like you were in a fancy ballroom. Red, blue, and gold flowers decorated everything in a somehow perfect way and I just, I've never felt so clueless about decorating because how the hell does it look *this* good?

When we finally reached the end of the seemingly infinite aisle, Wanda had to part ways from me, heading off to her side to stand in front of Hope. I tried to casually glance down to find my rock. Someone painted rocks with logos for everyone and placed them in the sand so we would know exactly where to stand. Finding the one with a spider on it, *thankfully it wasn't the exact Spider-Man logo because that would have been tough to explain if someone in the audience saw and asked about it*, I stood in my place.

It was only when watching Happy lead Maria down the aisle that I felt a pang of jealousy of her and Wanda and Hope because they get something to fiddle with. Yeah, a bouquet may be annoying to hold for so long but at least you get something to play with and have something to occupy your hands with. I just have to stand here like those guys in the cheesy Instagram photos of high school boys with their hands folded over their crotch as if that's not awkward at all.

Though, when Happy and Maria were only about two thirds of the way down the aisle there was a sudden lightning strike that landed far too close for comfort. *The sky could not have been any bluer, how could we be having lightning?! It wasn't even raining!* There was another lightning strike even closer and someone in the audience screamed. Immediately, I looked to my dad to see what to do, but he looked just as confused and concerned as I was. Scanning my eyes through the crowd they stopped on Happy because *where the hell did he get a gun?*

My attention was brought off that though, when Stephen Strange came running up, "Stark, this is probably Thor," he got straight to the point.

Realization crossed my dad's face, "I thought he couldn't come," he watched the next lightning strike rather than looking at his... friend? I dunno, Dr. Strange helped me a lot before but I'm not sure if you can exactly call them friends. They aren't enemies at least.

The wizard simply shrugged, "I found a way to contact him in order to invite him. Now don't go expecting any other gifts from me," he almost seemed serious, but my dad only smirked before

thanking him. The doctor must have only then noticed me watching because he then turned to me and greeted, “hello, Peter,” with what looked like a genuine smile before heading back to his seat. *Is it bad that I’ve always kinda thought he has a soft spot for me?*

With one last crack of lightning, there was a boom and suddenly Thor *oh my god oh my god it’s actually Thor! The god of thunder himself! Oh my god, oh my god, Thor wow, wait why are my knees buckling?* A strange pattern appeared burned into the sand under the God’s feet. “My friend!” He called out, running straight up to my dad, long majestic hair flowing behind him like it was a movie.

“You couldn’t have been subtler?” My dad joked, when Thor ran over to him and pulled him into a hug that I’m sure must have hurt. He even picked him up in the process, laughing about how honored he is to attend the ceremony. *He really is something else, isn’t he?* “It’s great to see you and I really appreciate you coming, but how about you put me down and then go sit so we can carry on?” With a laugh, the god placed him on the ground, just one last pat on the shoulder and he was in a seat.

*I guess not even a celebrity’s wedding can be perfect.*

But when it was finally time for my mom to come out, you would never think a single thing had gone awry today. Walking down the aisle, it was like even the ocean paused what it was doing, everyone too in awe of her. I’ve never seen anyone more beautiful in my entire life. Though of course her dress was gorgeous, what really stood out was the red heart necklace she wore. She floated down the aisle like an angel and I swear everyone in the room was crying. *For once I’m not ashamed to say I shed more than a few tears.*

What really got me to cry full on though was to turn around and see my dad with the biggest smile on his face that I’ve ever seen since I’ve known him, the tears on his face only seeming to make him shine brighter.

The actual ceremony turned out to be a lot simpler and shorter than I had expected, each speech and reading could not take away the pure awe I was left in from seeing my mom so angelic. *Like oh my god, that’s actually my mom. I’m actually related to someone so utterly magnificent like holy hell.* When it got time for the vows, that’s the only part they didn’t do for everyone to hear. It was meant for just the two of them, I swear I didn’t mean to listen in. It’s just kind of impossible not to when I’m like ten feet away with super hearing. *But I’ll never tell them I overheard, I’ll never tell anyone their private words.* What I will say is if I wasn’t crying before, I was sobbing now.

And the crying did not stop until the “I do,” and “obviously I do,” and until after it was my mom to pull my dad into their kiss. Not the other way around. *And they’re married. My parents are*

*officially married. Wow, we're finally officially a family.*

“Mr. and Mrs. Potts.”

## Chapter End Notes

Okay y'all well plans went out the window. My life has become so so crazy you wouldn't even believe it. It's so complicated and insanely stressful and overwhelming and I'm not even sure if I'll be able to finish posting this fic soon. The sequel will most likely need to be put on hold, I just I can't handle anything else on my plate. I can't even really handle what I do have already. I'd like to start writing the sequel and work on my other wip but I don't think either of those things are happening anytime soon. It's gonna be awhile before things calm down. I'm sorry guys, I know I've talked about the sequel so much and I really do wanna start it I just can't handle more when everything else is in an overwhelming chaos.

Thank you for reading :)

## to have fun

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Ironically, the dinner at the reception *dinner* was not the highlight. It was obviously delicious and I even got the comfort of sitting next to my dad at the head table, despite the fact that it should have been the best man at his side. Rhodey insisted I should sit with my parents and honestly I can't thank him enough. The best part of the dinner turned out to be the speeches. *Though seeing my art decorating the tent was definitely close to best.* And no I did not suddenly decide to give a speech despite not being prepared at all. *Even if that speech wasn't awful doesn't mean I'm doing that shit again.*

I left the honor to Natasha and Rhodey to give the speeches, which I assume is custom for the maid of honor and best man to give them. Since I did not have the crippling fear of unprepared public speaking coming up, I could actually pay attention this time. *I probably should have paid better attention last time.*

Natasha stood up first, as poised as a ballerina, "if you knew the story of how I initially met Pepper and Tony, you would have never thought that they wouldn't hate me, let alone that I could be close enough to be the maid of honor. Let's just say that it's not as hard to trick a genius than you would think," she smirked, causing the entire tent to laugh. Though the reception was held in a large tent on the beach, it was decorated so nice it looked like a real room, a very nice expensive room.

The Black Widow continued on, "I went from an assistant, to not exactly an enemy but close enough, to coworker, to family. Our story really could be a movie," she actually smiled so big her eyes wrinkled, "Pepper and Tony have not ceased to show me what love and family looks like. They really are more understanding and compassionate than anyone gives them credit for," though her words were said with complete control, you could see the ever rising emotion in her eyes.

*My mom and dad really do know how to give anyone a family, don't they? I never really thought about the other people they've done that for, but they really have helped so many. How did they end up so... like this? They really are without comparison.*

Though she continued to talk as if she wasn't losing her usual façade, "I could go on and on, even sharing all of Star- I mean Pott's dirty secrets, but I should probably save that for another time," she winked before giving the mic off to Rhodey. *What kind of dirty secrets? She is a spy so obviously she's capable of lying but I would not be surprised if she really did have some dirt ready for a rainy day.*

Standing up, my dad's best friend began, "I've had the privilege of knowing this stupid genius for

most of my life, and let me tell you, if there's one thing I've learned is that he will always surprise you." *Well, that is not where I saw the speech going but color me intrigued.* "He will always find a way to shock you, whether it be a ridiculously high Galaga score or that he made a super suit in a cave. But the thing about his surprises, is he always comes through."

*I concur. He has been the king of surprising me, everything from inviting me to tag along to Germany to bringing me home with him after a bad situation to adopting me.*

Rhodes took a deep breath before he kept on talking, "I have gotten the privilege to see Tones grow more than probably anyone. From a far too young alcoholic to a careless business owner to a superhero to a dad, I've been able to watch how he's grown in all the best ways." *He really has seen my dad through it all. I could never imagine him as anything other than the dad I have, it's crazy to think he used to just be some alcoholic. I don't think I'll ever truly understand how lucky I am to have him, given all the factors it took to bring us together.* "He has grown into a man I can say I truly admire," the earnestness pouring into his voice was almost overwhelming.

When I looked at my parents, I swear there were tears in both of their eyes. *I don't think I've ever seen anyone happy cry so much before... hell I don't even think I've happy cried so much in one day before. I never thought before that crying could feel so nice, that it could be more fulfilling than draining. More surprises I guess.*

He went on though, to soften the mood with a few stories of their college selves that even got me laughing out loud. He really does know how to work a crowd. And he succeeded because soon after everyone was ready to start dancing despite that the cake had not been cut yet. The cake was not what I had expected, for some reason I had pictured an Iron Man themed cake, or even something themed around Rescue. But instead it was figured of my parents on the top, just them, no superhero suits.

*I think that's how it's meant to be.*

After getting some elegant pictures of them sharing the first bites of the pastry, my dad seemed to have whispered something even I couldn't hear because the next thing that happened there was cake all over his face. He did not even try to get cake on her face, *which I dare say is a good idea. If he had I'm sure his own head would have been on a plate.* I have never ever seen my mom laugh so hard before. *It was nice, to say the least.*

*I couldn't think of a better reception.* That is, until the music started and Clint started walking over to me. Maybe it was my Spidey Sense but for some reason I was sure he was going to ask me to come into the dance floor with him.

## Chapter End Notes

I'm not happy with how this chapter turned out but this will be a really really really busy and overwhelming month and I just need to get this fic done.  
Thank you for reading



## to dance

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“Hey, Pott’s spawn, ready to dance?” Clint asked me with far too much enthusiasm, Nathaniel on his hip. *Does he ever run out of energy? That must be where his kids get it from.* Knowing there is no possible way I could get out of it even if I tried, I nodded and followed him to the ‘dance floor’. The floor was more just an open area of the tent free of tables, the only thing there being the DJ, playing some song I did not recognize. Glancing around the room as I walked I only just noticed how everyone was barefoot in the sand and why didn’t I think of that?

Immediately upon entering I was attacked by two hyper kids, “Peter!” Lila yelled as she jumped on my back, while Cooper jumped into my arms. “I missed you!” She sounded exasperated yet excited at the same time, like she had not seen me in a million years. *I guess it kind of does feel like that, a lot has happened since I was at the farm. It’s always like that, isn’t it?*

I could not help but let out the laugh bubbling up in me, “I missed you guys too,” I told them while trying to balance both kids on me without either falling. *Thank god for my stickiness.* Though before any of us could say anything further, the Cha Cha Slide began and *holy shit I’ve never seen anyone move so fast*. Both kids leaped off me, each grabbing one of my hands and yanking me to the middle of the sandy area.

Both Lila and Cooper screamed along to the song, not sang but screamed the words with more passion than a professional singer. They clapped so hard I’m sure their hands must have started to sting immediately. Even with my level of stamina it was hard to keep up with their rapid dance moves, being at least two beats ahead of the music the entire time.

*Who knew dancing could be so fun?*

We did not get a break though because as soon as that song was over, the Cupid Shuffle came on next. And then the Hokey Pokey, then the Chicken Dance song and *oh my god who is choosing these songs? There’s not even any other kids here besides me and the Barton kids why is there not any other kinds of songs?*

After far too much way too intense dancing, the DJ finally announced that it was time for some slow songs. *As fun as the kids are, one can only take so much dancing at that pace for so long. Even an enhanced person.* When I was about to head back to my seat at the head table, Natasha came up to me. “Can I have this dance?”

I'm sure I must have looked comical with how much my eyes widened, "me? You wanna dance with me?" *God, why did my voice have to crack right then?*

She gave me a smile so much softer than I ever would have expected out of her, "who else?" And with that she grabbed me by the hand and pulled me back to the middle dance floor. *At least there's more people dancing this time.* I guess more people would rather slow dance than do childish dances. Thankfully Natasha took lead, pulling me through each movement with so much grace I'm sure she had to have had dancing lessons. *I mean, I wouldn't be surprised if she's just naturally this talented.*

Around us, Bucky was leading Steve through a dance that I think I've seen in a movie before, must be a '40's kinda thing. Clint and Laura looked even sweeter though, he having pressed his face into her shoulder in such a cutely intimate way. *It's so foreign to see this side of him.* About halfway through the song even my parents came to dance together which only made me smile more. *But oh my god I'm dancing with Black Widow. The Black Widow actually asked me to dance, me of all people. Is this even real, Natasha Romanoff actually wants to dance with me?*

Suddenly Natasha asked, "is this your first time dancing with a woman?" She smirked at me, and I got a feeling she already knew the answer. *Because of course she does.*

I could not help but my throat to tighten up, "what- why do you say that?" *I say it as if it's not painfully obvious how awkward I am. I can't even talk to her without stumbling over my words like an idiot.* She only laughed in response, not actually answering my question. *She's a spy, I shouldn't be surprised now should I?*

By the time the song was finishing up Natasha was still firmly holding my hand, seeming set to dance another song with me and who am I to deny?

Before we could begin dancing again though, someone I did not recognize interrupted with a honey coated southern accent, "can I have this dance?" *What even is the point of my Spidey Sense if I never know when anyone's coming?* When I turned I was met with I swear is the most handsome person I have ever seen. A guy who didn't look too much older than me stood before us and my throat closed so hard I'm not sure if I'll ever be able to talk again. *How can anyone be that cute? Didn't Dad say something about another teenager that was invited here? What was his name god damn it?*

Wait, I'm straight. Why am I so flustered, I'm straight?

*But of course he must want to dance with the Black Widow. Who wouldn't?* I nodded, not even

daring to try to speak, knowing I would just make a mess of everything. I dropped the superhero's hand, already taking a step back to give him his chance. Instead of turning towards Natasha though, he turned to me, gently gripping my hand, his other hand landing on my waist and *god the air fled from my lungs* .

*God I thought I was straight, what is going on? Am I just like, romance starved from not having interacted with another teenager in forever? What is happening?*

The boy leading me through the dance with his firm yet soft hands, coolly asked, "what's your name, darlin'?" *I think I'm just going to melt like a chocolate bar in the sun right here.* I tried to form words but I couldn't get anything out but pathetic little squeaks. He just chuckled at my floundering, "I'm Harley Keener." *Oh! That's his name, he's the one that helped my dad back in the day.* "I like your suit."

*Now is definitely not the time for an identity crisis. This needs to be one of those things to worry about after my parents' honeymoon. Yeah, he's probably just a flirt. He's probably most like this with everyone and I'm just not used to being around teenagers anymore?* "I- um, you look good too. I like your suit too, I mean. Sorry," *god, why can't I talk like a normal person?*

Wait when did we start standing this close, who is this guy? *Yeah, he's just a flirt, I'm totally normal. Ish.*

"Thank you, I do think I look pretty sharp if I do say so myself," he smirked, blue eyes looking far too deeply into mine. What is he trying to do to me? Before I could even try to come up with a response, he was spinning me and then his arms were around me *and why is my brain working so slow and yet on overdrive at the same time?*

The song was over before I could figure out what the hell was going on. *Yep this is something to worry about later. Way later. I mean, there's nothing to worry about, he's just flirtatious. No one would be interested in me, that must just be his personality. Yeah, nothing to worry about. Nothing at all.*

## Chapter End Notes

This is definitely one of the chapters I was most looking forward to. I really love writing Harley and this lil sexuality crisis is something I reallyyyy wanted to introduce in this fic but I couldn't figure out where it would fit until I thought to have Harley at the wedding. For several several months now I've desperately wanted Harley in this

fic. If I write the sequel I will definitely be going into these themes further. I do very much want to write the fic, I have the beginning somewhat planned out and I know the big plot points I want for the sequel as a whole. It's just everything is so so incredibly unbelievably complicated right now and only getting more so. Now my physical health took a turn and I just absolutely can not help my physical and mental health at the same time so my mental health has to come first. But I don't even know where my mind will be in an hour let alone next month.

After next month I don't know what my life will look like. I don't know if I'll be able to write, and even if I have the means and the time I have no idea where my mental health will be. It's already so hard and it'll only get more complicated. I already have the last chapter written but I may try to write the first chapter of the sequel before I post. I can decide later whether or not to begin posting the sequel. I'm scared if I don't start posting the sequel now while everything is at my version of normal then I'll never start the sequel, but I'm scared if I start the story it'll be forever before I can really post for it more. I know I'll never be able to post regularly. I absolutely do not want to lose this series I just don't know what that looks like anymore. I don't want to lose you guys. I've had this story since 2018 and it's a huge coping mechanism for me. I don't want to lose that coping mechanism if I don't write the sequel but I also don't know how it feels to not have a WIP looming over me since 2018. I don't know what to do. Ironically I don't know what I need.

## to mend my wings

### Chapter Notes

Wow last chapter y'all! I had no idea how big this story was gonna be, I originally was gonna have this fic be a one shot, then I was gonna make it into just a few chapters long, but then I kept writing and writing and now I'm here. This is by far the longest thing I've ever written in my life and definitely the one I'm most proud of. (Also my note was too long so I had to put this section at the beginning instead of at the end with the rest of it 😊)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

After maybe a few too many slices of cake, *I mean what other excuse is there to not dance after sucha... strange slow dance?*, the night was finally wrapping up. The last hurrah of the reception was my parents signing their marriage certificate, and even I got to sign too as a witness. Am I the only one who didn't know that was a thing?

When the evening was over, my dad and mom brought me back to the Malibu house, planning on flying out to their honeymoon the next day. We would go in the plane together to New York and then they would just continue their flight after dropping me and the rest of the wedding party off. *I tried to argue that they should head straight to their honeymoon destination, but they weren't having any of it. They're just that generous, that willing to go out of their way to make me comfortable.*

*Is it bad to say I was relieved?*

Finally saying goodnight, I gave them each a hug, whispering, "I love you, mom," and "I love you, dad," respectively. I really will never be able to say it enough, I can only hope they can grasp how much they mean to me. *I only had to ignore the tiny nagging part of me that wanted to ask about Harley, whether he is actually just a flirt or if there was something more. But that isn't a question I need answered right now. Yeah, nope, that's something for later. Yeah... later. Right.*

"I'm so proud of you kid," my dad told me, "so so proud," and looking him in the eye I could just tell he meant it. There was not a hint of pretending in his eyes and *what did I do to deserve you?* With that, I headed to my temporary room in my own 'wing' of the house. I did not question it though, finally collapsing onto the overly soft bed. *I finally get to rest my feet. I finally just get a rest... no more wedding to work for. No more art I'm required to make. Now, now it's just me and my family.*

*Oh my god I finally have a family. A real, unconditionally loving, alive family. The Potts. Pepper, Tony, and Peter Potts. I've never heard any better names. And that's not even my entire family, I have Bucky and Steve and Natasha and Clint and Happy and Rhodey and Wanda and wow.... wow I have a big family for the first time in my life.*

Sitting up, I stretched until I got a nice crack in my back. If I don't get up now, I'll end up falling asleep in my disgusting sweat stained suit. Peeling off the clothes was definitely the most satisfying feeling ever. After a quick shower, I was collapsing back into bed. *God it's never felt so comfortable before.*

*This is my life. It's comfortable. Wow... sometimes I just... wow. Yeah it's not perfect, sometimes my bed is riddled with nightmares instead of peaceful sleep and sometimes my pillow is tear stained but that doesn't mean it's that bad. No, not bad. It's not bad. Because when I have my nightmares I know I have a dad there that I can go to when I can't handle being alone. But he's also giving me that freedom to go to him or not going to him. I'm not trapped anymore.*

I could not help but have a small smile grace my lips at that thought, how could I not?

*With May, either I cried silently or I got in trouble for showing my manipulative emotions. There was no winning, only more pain and more pain and more pain.*

Yeah, tomorrow we'll have to fly out and that sucks so much, but I won't be alone. They won't let me suffer alone anymore. And when they're gone, I'll still have a family who actually wants to stay with me. *I don't have to do this alone anymore, I have options. I never really thought that I wouldn't have to be alone anymore. Even in the good I thought I'd have to stay on my own, let alone the bad. But now... now everything's changed. And yeah change is scary but it's not bad. On the contrary, it's good. We get to be better together.*

I used to just be a bird with broken wings. My whole body wasn't broken, I wasn't broken, but my way to get higher, to get further was impaired. I couldn't keep going on my own, at least not effectively. My feet weren't made to go long distances, but flying on broken wings only fractured them more. Every attempt to go forward only brought me backwards, only hurt me more. As hard and as relentlessly as I tried to continue, I just couldn't do it.

I needed to be mended and that's not something I could do on my own. I needed someone to take my wings in their gentle hands and wrap them up, give me a chance to heal correctly. On my own, even if I healed my wings still would have been warped and not properly fixed. It still would have hurt to fly.

My dad, he took my wings in his hands and he took the time to put each bone back into place. I still can't fly, but I'm getting closer every day. My bones are finally healing in the right place, I won't be warped anymore. Maybe I won't be able to fly right away even when my wings are okay again, but one day I'll soar. One day I can glide up into the sky but I'll still have a soft place to land. I'll still have a nest to come back to no matter how far I fly. *I never even thought I'd be able to flap my wings without excruciating pain, let alone be able to soar.*

And one day I'll be able to. I don't know when I'll fly again, but I will one day. I know I will. I just gotta keep my wings in their bandages and keep on working for the day I can be more independent. For now, maybe it's okay to depend. To depend on people who know what it's like to hurt your wings, break them, and to heal and work to fly again. Who knows what it's like to be new.

I can be new. I am new. I'm not who I used to be, yeah I'm more damaged, but that doesn't make me worse. My wings will never be the same again but that's not necessarily a bad thing. I know the work that goes into fixing them, I know how to take care of them better. I know how to be better one day.

*I will be better.*

## Chapter End Notes

I know this story doesn't have a perfect ending, and honestly it's not meant to. I know y'all wanted a happier ending, but this, this is most realistic to me. Peter still has depression and anxiety, Peter still has triggers and nightmares and self esteem issues, he isn't completely better. Because that's how I am, I have all those things. This story is me, and I'm not better so I can't and won't fabricate an ending that I don't know what it feels like. So so many of you have commented on how real this story feels, and I feel like the worst thing I could do is create a perfect sappy ending just to make Peter get his happily ever after. It is absolutely possible for someone to get better, and maybe to not have their mental illnesses anymore, to not have active triggers anymore, to not deal with nightmares, to be confident and happy, that's just not my personal life experience, and my experience is what I write from.

I tried to do a hopeful ending. And I do think that's enough, because sometime you don't get your happily ever after. Sometimes it's just the progress that matters, that you can look back and say that yeah you've made progress. That you aren't in that same exact place anymore. Even if it doesn't seem like much, it is. Absolutely. The little steps, they aren't little. They are everything because that's one step closer to maybe being better one day. And I do have some hope of being better. I didn't used to. That's why I think it's so important to end this hopefully, I hope it is hopeful, because I know how much I needed hope during the worst of things. I know how close I was to just giving in.

I'm not better. I can't write Peter really better yet because I'm not better, I don't know what that feels like and this entire fic is a vent fic. And because in my experience recovery takes years and I still have a very very long way to go and I have a lot of setbacks and bad days and I want to write my experience, I want to show how hard it is, how long it takes, and that even though it's so hard it can happen. I can recover one day, but I need to keep working at it. I, for the first time in my life, may have a chance very soon to be safe and free and happy. Only then can I really begin to recover. I decided that what I think is best for me and this series is that I have written the first chapter of the sequel, What I've Found, and I will be posting it right after I post this chapter. It'll be a lot less scary for future me to already have the story begun and tagged, it gives me something to work with. I want to help future me be less overwhelmed so that I can continue this series, because even though I won't be posting regularly still I still plan to continue writing.

The story isn't over. I want him to make a full recovery. But I need my own. I don't know how long it'll take or if it'll ever happen, but I have hope. I'm not giving up yet, there's more progress to be made. And yeah, I have seen progress. It doesn't look like a lot to me, but maybe no one can really see how much progress they've made because they just see how much further they have to go. I have a long way to go, undoubtedly, but I also can't discount that I am not getting panic attacks as much anymore, and I haven't dissociated nearly as much as before. That's progress for me. And I think that's enough to show progress.

I'm sorry if this isn't the ending you wanted, there's a part of me that agrees. But I also think it's important to show that it's okay for the journey to not be over yet. To show that it's okay to not have everything together, to not be completely better.

I can't even begin to be able to thank you guys, each and every person who has commented on and supported this story and have reached out to me personally. I have made more friends through this story than through anything else, I have met the most important people in my life through this story. My best friends and my girlfriend came through this story and I will forever be so grateful for it and for them and for everything this story has helped me with. This is by far my biggest fic and it's the one I've gotten the most support on. The comments I've received have meant the absolute world to me, they've helped me keep going and not give up,, on everything. What do I need has been one of my biggest coping mechanisms and I'm hoping the sequel can help to fulfill a similar purpose. It would take me forever to write out individual thank yous to all my commenters and friends so I'll just say a general thank you so so so much. Y'all don't even know how much your words have meant to me and inspired and encouraged me. The comments made me feel more loved and seen and valid than anything else had ever before. I love y'all so much thank you for seeing me and supporting me and helping me get through everything.  
and thank you for reading :)

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